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GOD'S WILL
FOR THE WORLD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

DOES CHRIST STILL HEAL?

An Examination of the Christian
View of Sickness and a Presentation
of the Permanency of the Divine Com-
mission to Heal.

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

GOD'S WILL FOR THE WORLD

*A Refutation of the Popular
Interpretation of the Phrase*
"THY WILL BE DONE."

BY
HENRY B. WILSON, B.D.

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"THE POWER TO HEAL," ETC.



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PART I.
THY WILL BE DONE.

GOD'S WILL FOR THE WORLD

PART I.

THY WILL BE DONE.

INTRODUCTION.

IN endeavoring to reveal the will of God and His true character as a loving Father to the Jews, Jesus was compelled to reverse completely the established Hebraic conception of God. (1) He abrogated their theory of God as a vengeful, punishing Deity; (2) He revealed Him as ever working and ever yearning for man's wholeness and happiness in body and soul, and working as actively in this respect on the Sabbath as on any other day. This disregard of *their* traditions and customs in the operation of God's will, and this claim of oneness, marked the beginning of their hostility which ended in His death.

In the endeavor to restore, after centuries of neglect, the healing ministry to the Church, the only serious opposition has come from Church teachers and is based on religious grounds. First it was that the "miracles" of healing were used by

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Jesus only as signs of His Messiahship and were gradually withdrawn after the Church was organized. This has been so completely overthrown that few are to be found who hold it now.

Second, and more serious, was the claim that God sent sickness and disaster as a means of discipline, and that it was to be accepted as such for our good. Many clung to this theory so tenaciously as to glorify it by designating it as a "sacrament of suffering." They defended their position by reminding their hearers that, in His suffering, Jesus said: "Not my will, but Thine be done."

This sacred phrase has to many been unanswerable and conclusive. It has been accepted even though it did not satisfy. This theology has been strengthened by the fact that each year, with the recurrence of Good Friday, and the wonderful message of love, there are presented the scene in the Garden and the unforgettable prayer. In many churches and in innumerable devotional books there are the conventional expansion and misinterpretation of these words, carrying with them the idea that the hand of God is behind every agony that may come upon us, and that if we would be true Christians, we must learn to

pray and "submit" as Jesus did. Thus, each year, another barrier is raised by religious teachers between the heart of the seeker and the heart of God; a great truth is emptied of its content, and, in consequence, multitudes of God's dear children are deprived of the ministry of healing in spite of the simple teachings of the Master all through His life.

During a recent mission in Washington I tried to show how wrong it would be to connect God with the deaths of the ninety-eight persons who were killed in a theater disaster in that city. The next day a young woman, who had lost her brother in that accident, stated that she had been visited by several of her church people, who were quite sure that the disaster was a punishment sent by God because of "theater-going." She said our message brought her much comfort. It is an easy matter to repudiate such theology, but yet these people were taught this untruth by church teachers, who are still engaged in teaching it, and who insist upon linking disaster and death with the will of God.

What Then of Suffering?

Some persons say that if we teach in this way we take away all manner of Christian suffering

and deprive the teaching of Jesus of much that is of value. Such statements are due to a misunderstanding of the teaching of Jesus and also of our teaching, which is in accord with His. We do not state there is to be no Christian suffering. Frequently a person is called upon to undergo very real suffering because of his Christian position. He fails in discipleship if he avoids persecution or suffering in any form *for the sake of the Master and His teachings*.

This is the *true suffering*, that God's will may be done, and the true Christian is often recognized by his willingness to accept suffering of this character, and bear it bravely. Such suffering Jesus taught.

But this is a very different kind from the suffering produced by disease or disaster, caused either by sin or ignorance; and Jesus not only did not suffer in this way but He fought *it as an evil and as against God's will*.

There may be a sorrow, an abiding pain in real Christian suffering, but there is also an inner joy which more than compensates. Otherwise, we do not glimpse the meaning of the words: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for

great is your reward. . . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

But with sickness, infirmity and death there was never any counsel of acceptance or submission, but rebuke and overcoming—all for God’s glory, and that His will be done.

No other explanation of the wonderful words of the Master is compatible with the reconstruction of God’s character as revealed by Him.

This book is offered with the hope that it may bring to many a glimpse of the real power that lies behind a true knowledge of God’s will and plan, which may be obtained by clearing away the misconceptions of the past. To say we cannot know the will of God is to shut our eyes and ears to the simple teachings of Jesus.

H. B. W.

CHAPTER I.

“THY WILL BE DONE.”

NEVER can there be any great progress made in the efforts to renew and restore the gift of healing to the Church at large until there has been a clearing away of the false theology surrounding the atonement of our Lord in His death upon the Cross, and a complete reversal of the popular conception and teaching of the character of the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

For many generations it has been the function of the preachers of all denominations to teach that in great disasters, illnesses or bereavements God's hand is to be seen, either exercising a needed discipline or working out some plan which would eventually result in good. Especially has this teaching come to the front at times when there were many innocent victims in distressing catastrophes, or in the sudden and mysterious taking off of some young person, noted for good works.

Wherever there appeared a tragic upheaval

in the scheme of human life, which seemed irreconcilable with a standard that was good and equable, and which moved the soul to resentment, the conventional religious teachers have stepped forward, and with a view toward comforting the distressed soul and saving it from rebellion, have said:

“We must not rebel against God’s will. It is all for a good purpose.”

Then, according to the nature of the case, the questions would come:

“But why should my child be taken in this way?”

“But why should I suffer these awful pains?”

“But why should my husband have his life so cruelly crushed out when he was doing so much good in the world?”

It makes little difference what the character of the despairing, searching, bewildered cry may be, the answer has been invariably the same:

“We cannot question God. We only know that He loves us; that His plan for us is good and for the best and that ‘some day we will understand.’ We must remember our Lord’s prayer in the Garden that the cup might pass from Him, and when God did not answer that prayer, He said, ‘Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.’ So we

must learn to say, 'Not my will but Thine be done.' "

This is an argument which seems unanswerable. It usually closes the discussion. It may have had a benumbing mental effect and a tendency to lead the hearer into a state of conventional Christian resignation, but it never yet satisfied a yearning, grieving soul, reaching out to God in its grief and craving a ray of comfort in some sort of Divine response or explanation. In innumerable instances it has been rejected; and as it was considered the official teaching of the Church, and the revelation of the character of God, both Church and God have been rejected also.

In presenting the experience of Jesus in the Garden to answer the questioning of those stricken with disease or misfortune the teachers of the Church have for centuries been presenting logical fallacies. In deductive reasoning, the fallacy is that of "accent," where a phrase stripped of its context is given an entirely different meaning. In inductive reasoning, it is an error of "apperception," seen in the tendency to be too much biased by past training and habits of thought.

A little investigation and study will reveal these fallacies. That is why the argument fails to satisfy the soul. If a flaw can be found in it by

the exercise of the mental faculties alone, it is easy to see why the spiritual faculty should fail to discern Divine light and receive solace.

Without going too far into the purely academic side, the main difficulty will be discerned when it is stated that in using our Lord's experience in the Garden *a case is presented that is not analogous*. Jesus was not suffering from any disease. He was fighting a spiritual battle and a moral battle which involved the possibility of physical violence to His Person.

In the case of sickness, disease and accident, it is a case of a physical battle only, although it may have unfortunate moral or religious results.

We see, in some cases, religious harm resulting when one is told that his physical pain is part of God's will and that he therefore should submit and accept it. The belief of that person in the character of God is likely to be shaken, especially if the suffering has not been caused by any fault or sin on his own part.

Even if the belief of a person is not shaken by such a message, even if he accepts it and submits with what is considered a pious resignation, he has been given a *warped view of God*, a faulty view, a view that is an affront to God's love and nature.

So in either case moral and religious harm has been done by the analogy. Between the one who rejected God for this teaching and the one also who still held a belief in Him, coupled with such inhuman cruelty, I frankly would prefer to be classed among the former. I could not pledge allegiance to nor worship a God who would plan and execute such unspeakable cruelty and in such an illogical, whimsical way. I demand a God who has a moral standard at least as high as the moral standard I am capable of comprehending. The standards implanted in us are those of Jesus. I hold fast to the God of love and tenderness as revealed by Him and I refuse to accept the God of the theologians and the reflections on His character in many of the prayers, which are in direct opposition to the simple teaching of Jesus, as contained in the Gospels.

I am not unmindful that I have been dealing only with the innocent sufferer. Our principle is not limited to such cases, but may be applied to others. Let us take the case of a man or woman suffering pain or illness brought on as a direct result of *wilful sin on his own part*.

Here, certainly, the analogy of Gethsemane fails, for what possible comparison can there be between the spotless, sinless Christ, wrestling with

a call to complete sacrifice, and a defiled sinner, reaping the physical consequences of wrong doing?

Even to such an one it is wrong to suggest that it is God who is thus *causing* the suffering in order that He may chasten and restore. It is again a false theology that sets God up to sinners as one who hunts them down for their misdeeds and inflicts a penalty because His laws have been broken. Nowhere did Christ reveal a Father of this character. In none of His words or acts can we find any basis for this theology. The punishment that any wilful sinner suffers is self-inflicted and does not fall from the hand of an avenging God.

(Note: Supporters of this theory find themselves facing a great dilemma in the escape of the wicked, in many instances, from any physical suffering. I have treated this point at length in a previous book, *Does Christ Still Heal?*)

God does not punish. Our Lord revealed this in His treatment of the young man who was a sinner. He forgave his sins, which He saw was the greatest craving and deepest need in this man's heart and soul, and then restored the physical health, which had been impaired by the evil living.

God's work is to *create, forgive, heal and restore*. The only punishing or destructive forces

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are to be found in the powers of evil set in operation by the rebellious will of man, working against God, rejecting His plan and spurning His love.

So to the innocent sufferer through disease or bereavement, as well as to the sinner, we cannot, if we be true to Christ's teaching, suggest that it is God's will that is being done, and offer, as consolation, the words spoken in the Garden. To do this is to offer a false consolation, a comfort that does not soothe, and to bestow upon God, the Father, a character that is foreign to His nature and His will as revealed by the Son.

CHAPTER II.

CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL.

WE are to consider in this book one of the greatest problems man has ever faced. It is a problem that embraces the heathen as well as the most civilized Christian mind. It is of paramount importance to any one who has a God of any kind, whether it be the fancied spirit within the totem pole or the one God accepted by Christians.

What is the will of that Deity for the disciple?

The question is age-long, as long as the history of man.

For the average Christian, confronted by mysterious suffering from a stubborn disease, or by sudden death, the answer seems always to have been limited to the single trial in the Garden: God's will was revealed in the suffering He sent upon His Son. Therefore, although it is mysterious, although we cannot fathom its purpose, it must be accepted. This is the usual explanation.

In forever and incessantly applying this one text to disease and death, Christians are guilty of two errors:

1. They misinterpret the text by stripping it from its context.

2. *They actually represent Jesus as being uncertain with regard to the will of God. They infer that He was endeavoring to avoid an act which constituted an expression of God's will.*

Finally, they ignore the numberless statements in which He claims a perfect knowledge of that will, and demonstrates His joyful compliance with it. Therefore we shall better understand the Garden scene, and the prayer uttered there will be given its true meaning, if we consider briefly the attitude of Jesus with regard to God's will, and His oneness with it, as exhibited throughout this life.

I shall not pile text upon text but shall only offer that which I feel will be convincing and which I hope may prove inspirational to further reading. St. John's gospel alone will be sufficient for our present purpose.

At the very beginning of His ministry, His passion that He might express the will of God in human acts and words is seen in the statement

“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” (St. John 4:34.) It is metaphor. That ideal is the food which sustains Him. It is the nourishment of His life.

In the healing of the impotent man, this claim of oneness with and knowledge of the will of God brought Him into His first great controversy with the Jewish leaders. When they took Him to task for breaking the Sabbath He claimed He worked as God's instrument. “My Father worketh hitherto (in this manner and up to this time) and I work.” This made matters worse for Him and they sought to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but had said also that God was His father, making Himself equal with God. Jesus answers them by making the truth which had enraged them even more definite. He claims He does nothing by Himself, but what He seeth the Father do. “For what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” (St. John 5:19.) Later He reminds them that He does not seek His own will but the will of the Father which hath sent Him. (Verse 30.) In the following chapter He tells them again: “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.” (St. John 6:38.)

His Teaching Reveals God's Will.

When He began to teach in the temple, He was met by the same hostile criticism which His works had brought upon Him. His answer was the same. It was nothing new He taught or anything of His own creating. "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." (St. John 7: 16.) He appeals to the will of God for proof of His position. Any man, He says, who is consecrated to the performance of the will of God will be able to recognize the character of His doctrine, "whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (St. John 7: 17.)

The Heart of the Problem.

I feel that in the above verse lies the whole heart of the problem as well as the answer. Jesus raised the highest standard possible to man: i. e., *perfect conformity to the will of God*. He was willing to rest the value of His teaching, His words, and works upon the perception of those who had attained that standard. There is also included in the thought, that the desire to perform God's will, will result in substantiating, in man's heart, the truth of His position and revelation. A very great dilemma is presented to those

who stumble at the teaching of Jesus. To those who questioned it at that time and who failed to catch His vision, He said: "I am not come of myself; but He that sent me is true, whom ye know not." (St. John 7:28.) Later, to the same critics, He said: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (St. John 8:19.) Again He points out the secret of their failure to accept His teachings: "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." (St. John 8:47.)

We shall never obtain a true conception of the nature of the controversy which brought forth these denunciations from Him unless we realize they were not spoken to ignorant peasants but *to a group of theologians and scholars* and those who were leaders in the Jewish religion, and the official exponents of the worship of God.

In the course of His defence, which comprises nearly all of the eighth chapter, and which I earnestly hope will have close reading, He tells them several times that He speaks *only those things* which He has heard of the Father and also that He "does always those things that please Him." (St. John 8. 29.)

In starting to heal the man born blind, He announces that He "must work the works of Him

that sent me." (St. John 9:4.) Following the violent controversy which then ensued, also over an act of healing, He again stakes all upon His perfect harmony with God's will. "If I do not the works of the Father, believe me not." (St. John 10:37, 38.)

The entire ninth chapter is a striking presentation of the contrasting opinions of the character of God held by the Jewish leaders and Jesus. First, the disciples had to be shown that God was not the author of blindness. Then the Jews felt the honor of God had been blemished because the act of mercy had been performed on the Sabbath. To the Pharisees such an act proved Jesus incapable of real relationship with God. "This man is not of God." (Verse 16.) They set up God and Moses against Jesus and reviled the man who defended Him. The bitter controversy, theological to the last degree, goes on throughout the tenth chapter, all of which should be read as a commentary on the ninth chapter and its problems. It again results in an attempt on His life, all over an act of healing performed, in the eyes of the Jews, contrary to God's will.

In His final talk with His disciples, which begins with the fourteenth chapter of St. John, He summarizes again and again the perfect harmony

of all that He has done and said, with the will of God. To the yearning appeal of Philip, for a clearer revelation of God, He makes the unequivocal reply, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." (St. John 14:9, 10.)

The extension of God's love and the expression of Jesus' love are inseparable. A disciple's love and obedience to His words will result in an outpouring of love from God. This is because His words are so truly a reflection of what God would say. No doubt can remain on this point when He says: "And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (St. John 14:21-24.)

These three chapters (14th, 15th, and 16th) are made up of constant repetitions of this great theme, uttered with almost every conceivable variation.

His Consciousness of Power.

Two other aspects of His knowledge of God's will and of the purpose in revealing that will, have an important bearing on our subject.

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1. His purpose in all that He did and said was that God might be glorified.

2. His aim in this respect was so single-minded that He possessed practically *perfect confidence* in God's *presence* and *power*. *There was no question in the mind of Jesus as to the real will of God in everything that He said; in every act that He performed.*

These two points are combined very closely in the raising of Lazarus. Jesus said unto Martha: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the *glory of God*?" (St. John 11:40.)

A moment later, *before He performed the act*, He said: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me, and I knew *Thou hearest me always*, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me."

I feel it is hardly necessary for me to point out that after every act of healing Jesus was constrained not to take glory to Himself, but to lead the people *to glorify God*. We read many times that this was so. "And the people when they saw it gave praise to God." He said to others, "Go tell what great things God hath done for you." How He gathers up this aspiration in His final great prayer: "I have glorified Thee on earth: I

have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." (St. John 17:4.)

In concluding this chapter I again remind the reader that what I have presented here is intended merely as suggestion for closer, deeper reading on this subject, especially in St. John's gospel. What I have presented, however, I feel is more than sufficient to justify me in the following summary:

Jesus, in every thought, word and act was consecrated to the performance of the will of God. In many instances He expresses Himself as being in perfect harmony with that will. He performed only God's acts, spoke only God's words, and did *always* those things that were pleasing to God.

Those *words* of Jesus were a reversal of Jewish theology regarding God, His wrath, His punishments, His vengeance, and His hand in sickness and in death.

Those *works* of Jesus were active expressions of God's will in restoring, loving, healing, forgiving, and steadily opposing and overcoming sickness, disease and infirmities of all kinds, and even going so far as to bring the dead back to life.

The words and works were beneficent, health-bestowing, life-giving, joyous. Never a demand for a further sacrifice, never a delay in restoration after the heart was given to God in faith. Never

a single instance either by word or inference that calamity was sent by God for chastisement, or that health should be delayed by God for a good purpose.

Jesus knew all this. Let us bear it in mind as we seek for light on the Garden Prayer.

Jesus knew the character of the will of God and strove earnestly to reveal it to men. In spite of all this, the Christian world has placed upon that scene the Hebraic conception of the will of God.

The Thesis.

My thesis therefore is that by virtue of Christ's knowledge of God's will, the true meaning of the Garden Prayer will be shown to be that He was aiming for *perfect instrumentality* in the performance of that will, not submitting in agony, as a victim under its inexorable and mysterious operation.

Supplementary Note.

The difficulty with the true acceptance of the revelation of Jesus has always been the theological interpretation of those who see themselves as leaders. The same temper which marked the teachers among the Jews was continued in many who stressed theology in the Christian religion. A

large number held and taught that God foreordained every event from the beginning. Others, while they did not go so far as this, taught that while God did not foreordain all events, He knew them without exception. Archbishop D'Arcy treats this problem in a masterly manner in Dr. Streeter's book.* He presents it as above and writes :

“But this latter view was but a *weak yielding of the head to the heart*. The old Predestinarians were perfectly right when they insisted on the strictest view of the doctrine, if held at all. Starting with one sole omnipotent Will and regarding all creation as the outcome of its decrees, it follows that the end in every detail is certain from the beginning. Also the human will is but the instrument of the Divine Will, and it is vain to try to relieve the *Almighty of responsibility* for every human action, bad or good. Everything is executed in perfect accord with the original design. The evil man as well as the good man is a means by which God effects His purposes.

“This doctrine, whatever the efforts made to qualify it or soften it away, can only be *consistent by making God the Author of evil*. Moreover, it

* *God and the Struggle for Existence*. By Streeter and Others. Association Press.

destroys the foundation on which it is built; because in order to affirm the supremacy of the Divine Will, it *denies the reality of the human will*. Gaining our whole idea of will from our experience of the faculty as it exists in man, we have no right to attribute it to God in a way which deprives man of it altogether. The theory breaks down philosophically as well as morally. The real problem is, how to combine in one scheme of thought a whole in which the human will retains its freedom of choice between good and evil, and at the same time the Divine Will secures the Universe from moral catastrophe, and realizes the great purpose for which creation exists. Here is the difficulty which has always confounded the speculative theologian. If he affirms the sovereignty of the Divine Will, he annihilates the human will: if he secures human freedom, he denies the omnipotence of God. This dilemma takes us to the very heart of the great problem before us."

CHAPTER III.

THE BATTLE IN GETHSEMANE.

I. "Not my will but Thine be done."

I APPROACH the consideration of the scene where these words were uttered with deepest reverence. No more glorious battle was ever fought on earth than that which Jesus wrought out in the Garden of Gethsemane, and no historic phrase has ever been given such faulty interpretation as this. That interpretation, popularly held and known as orthodox, rests upon the basis of an offended, angry God requiring reparation, ransom, or sacrifice for the sins committed by His wilful, disobedient children, and that it was our Lord's offering and surrender of Himself to propitiate the Father, which gave character and meaning to the words He uttered. For many centuries scholars and ecclesiastics wrote volumes explaining this demand on God's part for a sacrifice, and presenting the act of Jesus as the fitting offering to the Father in place of a degraded, sinful world. Different schools in the Church contested various

theories with deepest ardor, and when separations finally resulted, several of the denominations took as a basic part of their theology certain aspects of the atonement theory.

It may be said that my interpretation, which is not in harmony with the so-called orthodox interpretation, is based likewise upon my special theory. In defence of this I would plainly declare that the opposite is true. The so-called orthodox interpretations are built upon the preconceived doctrines in the Hebrew religion, based upon the necessity for sacrifice in every instance. Consequently every act, or every word that could be construed to support that doctrine or theory was grasped and applied. In several instances such interpretation does violence to the context as well as to the whole revelation of the mind of God as revealed by Jesus. I claim that such violence is done in the case of the conventional so-called orthodox theory.

It may easily be charged that I have my special theory and that I am shaping these words so that they will fit my interpretation. I grant the same searching comparison that I apply to the other theory. I claim that my interpretation *does not do violence to the text* and that it is in proper

harmony with the *whole context* of the revelation of God's Mind, made by Jesus of Nazareth.

I am content to rest my case upon the words and acts of Jesus as set forth in the Gospel, and I find that my interpretation receives endorsement and support throughout, and that the other theory finds no basis in the Gospel record. It takes its rise from the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, hundreds of the clergy have long since abandoned the theory of the atonement, which comprised the most important articles of belief in their various denominations. Some have frankly repudiated these old beliefs in their sermons. Others, however, have discarded them as untenable but have said nothing and have offered no explanation to clear up the conventional doctrine.

Upon the proper interpretation of these words rests one of the most vital aspects of Christian truth. Their constant misinterpretation by official teachers has driven many people from God and has kept multitudes who were seeking Him, from finding Him and truly knowing Him. The true interpretation will win many to Him, and reveal Him, in His true character to those now seeking blindly.

I appeal most earnestly, therefore, to those who have found the quest unsatisfactory and mysterious, to free their minds from early prejudices and to refuse to apply Old Testament customs, or texts from St. Paul's epistles, to this revelation of Jesus. The Master, by word and deed, set aside many of the fundamental religious conceptions contained in the Old Testament. We must also remember that much in St. Paul's writing was directed to a certain type of mind and dealt with many problems which do not exist in the present day. In spite of his great zeal, his conception of Christianity was colored to a considerable extent by the strong Hebraic influence from which he strove so obviously at times to free himself. This subject is expanded in a later chapter, "God and the Theologians."

The life and words of Christ are superior to the life and words of St. Paul, and when we admit that, we do St. Paul no discredit; nor do we dishonor him or belittle his wonderful epistles by placing them second in importance to the Gospels. But second in importance we do place them. The Gospels come first. That is our field of action and that is our challenge. Upon that ground we shall stand.

II. *Placing the Responsibility.*

As one frees his mind from old theories he finds there are no facts in the teachings of Christ upon which to build the theory (1) that God sent Him into the world to *die*, (2) that it was necessary in the Divine plan for Him to die upon the Cross, as a *ransom* or that God demanded such a sacrifice, or (3) that it was the Divine plan to redeem the world only through the crucifixion of Jesus.

Against the theories which have been built up on the false interpretation of this one phrase, "Not my will but Thine be done," there are many words of Jesus Himself which contradict the whole system.

Immediately after St. Peter's confession of his Master as the Christ (the anointed one), Jesus began to show unto His disciple "how that He must go to Jerusalem and *suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed* and be raised again the third day." When St. Peter tried to dissuade Him from this, He rebuked him, telling him he savored not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (St. Matt. 16: 21-23.) Then He sets forth the principle upon which He is acting, which is more valu-

able than life itself; i. e., "for whosoever will gain his life shall lose it." (St. Matt. 16:23-25.)

Later, while on the way to Jerusalem, He took the twelve apart and said to them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and *they* shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the *Gentiles* to mock and to scourge and *to crucify*." (St. Matt. 20:18, 19.)

In St. Mark's gospel, there is a slight variation of these words, as Jesus says unto the disciples: "The Son of man is delivered into the *hands of men* and *they* shall kill Him." (St. Mark 9:31.)

St. Luke gives practically the same account, using the identical words found in St. Matthew's gospel. (See St. Luke 9:22.) St. Luke, however, gives an interesting post-resurrection account, where this angelic message is given to the women at the empty tomb:

"He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, the Son of man must be delivered into the *hands of sinful men* and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (St. Luke 24:6-7.)

Those who were demanding and were to accomplish the death of Jesus were the *chief priests*

and scribes, all of whom were designated as "sinful men." He was to be scourged and crucified and killed by them. He was to be delivered into the hands of men. They were the ones who were demanding His death, not God, His Father.

If God were the agent demanding a sacrifice to appease His wrath, or to bring about a world's redemption, to what a place of honor would not Judas Iscariot be raised? He would have been but the chief actor in a great drama, planned according to the will of God. Let our Lord's own words oppose this conclusion. "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." No service to God was done in this shameless barter which led to the seizure of the truest of all Friends, that His enemies might slay Him. There was no reward to Judas for an awful duty, which he must perform as part of God's plan. On the contrary, his act resulted in the loss of his soul.

"None is lost save the son of perdition."

What a commentary on broken friendship were this: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." What deeper tragedy could one portray than this: "None is lost save the son of perdition."

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If those who nailed him to the Cross were even the unconscious instruments of God's will, how could Jesus, hanging there, pray for them: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

From the first words Jesus uttered concerning His passion, to the very end, we have no testimony of the operation of a Father's will, but continuous evidence that the execution was conceived, demanded and performed by *evil men*.

Free Will the Great Factor.

This will becomes much plainer to us as we keep in mind two great facts:

1. That God has never withdrawn the gift of free will from man. To do this would reduce us to mere automatons and render service to Him mechanical; and true loyalty, impossible. His Kingship is indeed regal in that we are given the privilege of choosing to become His subjects. We possess full liberty to refuse to serve and even to reject.

2. We must recognize that there is a vast difference between *purpose* and *permission*. Most of our difficulty in understanding Christ's life, and God's way, lies in our confusion of these two terms. They seem to mean the same thing to

many, even to many theologians. Ofttimes we use them alternately to express the same idea or fact, but they are as vastly separated in thought as the poles.

In bestowing the gift of free will upon man, God, in reality, grants him permission to choose and perform evil. But such a course is against His will, and consequently, *against His purpose*.

God's *will* and *purpose* can never *be identified with anything that is evil*, else God would be confessing the weakness of the plan that is the good plan or the God-plan. That good may appear to come out of evil is no evidence that God resorted to evil to accomplish His will, but that the power of God was stronger than the power of evil in that particular instance.

Jesus Possessed Free Will.

We must also realize that in Jesus, as perfect man, there was the same gift of free will and capacity for choice we see in other men. To have been without this would have rendered His service automatic. But it was not so. He was tempted in all respects as we are.

God sent His son into the world, not as a God—a perfectly supernatural Being—to frighten mankind into accepting His Kingship and to en-

force allegiance; but as *man*, to show forth the Father's love in human terms, in human words and deeds, and to invite loyalty.

In all this, His plan permitted the exercise of free will to the fullest. If men chose to reject Him and His son, He would not swerve from His purpose or even resort to compromise by using violence against mankind in time of danger or by withdrawing His son. Jesus entered into that plan, accepting human limitations, and He determined to remain true to that plan to the very end, subject to all its limitations and willing to accept even the results of violence at the hands of evil men.

It was not what the Father willed, but *how* and *when* He was to perform that will that Jesus was always meditating upon. He never thought for one minute that it was the Father's will that He should suffer death by violence. *Men alone were the instigators and instruments.* He realized that the Father must permit it, should it become inevitable, or else withdraw the gift of free will from mankind. By doing this God could have prevented the crucifixion.

By exercising His right of choice, Jesus also could have avoided the death. He could have left Jerusalem and remained away until the tumult

had ceased. He could have hidden Himself as He had on previous occasions when He escaped out of their hands. He knew the character of the errand of Judas. He knew enough of the laws of nature to walk away on the water where they could not easily follow Him, or He could have called upon the legions of angels to defend Him. He speaks of this invisible power right after the moment of betrayal. He refused however to resort to any of these measures. He determined that it was not God's will that He should further utilize these powers to end the persecution.

The prayer He offered then was the natural one of Him who bore flesh, who foresaw physical pain, great mental anguish and destruction, yet who was consumed by the desire to do and say those things which would harmonize with the perfect will of God. He knew the Jews were determined upon nothing short of His execution. He knew it was not His Father's purpose, so that was then His prayer, "Let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done."

By that He meant:—"Thy will be done in enabling me to bear well and without swerving the ordeal through which I am about to pass." Not for one moment in that prayer did our Lord con-

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nect the Father with *sending upon Him* the sufferings He was about to undergo. If this were so all of His former words would be emptied of their meaning. So, sustained by prayer of consecration to the higher will, the great love drama was worked out.

"Love so amazing, so Divine
Demands my love, my life, my all."

A Hard Fought Temptation.

Much clarity will be thrown on the subject if we view the whole scene, including the approach, in the light of a great temptation. It will be found in accord with the principles of the former temptations of Jesus in the desert. In them the temptation was to establish the Kingdom by means other than those in God's plan. (1) He would not miraculously minister to His body; (2) He would perform no wonder, or test God by such act; (3) nor would He compromise by admitting that evil could be accorded any allegiance. Here, in the Garden, it might be said that all these three temptations were merged in one great trial. There was again the instinct (1) to save the body from violence; (2) to perform a wonder; (3) to give the sign for which the Jews clamored and to compromise. We can see these three forms appear-

ing and re-appearing in quick succession from the moment of the arrest, through the trial and even to the very end. At every step of the contest we see His wondrous Figure giving battle to those evil forces and moving steadily on to victory.

Minor victories are to be noted all along the way. One is seen at the very beginning; we might say at the moment He enters the shadow of the final scene. Jesus entered it with an exclamation of triumph, seeing clearly for the moment the certainty of His path: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." (St. John 12:23.) Then as He expands His purpose, the pressure of temptation is clearly shown in the depression that falls upon Him. As in previous instances, He meets it at once and puts it from Him; at times it is with a quotation and then an answer to it. Dr. Pym has caught this aspect of the scene and has presented it very helpfully:*

"The method of His thought in face of such temptation is exactly illustrated in the twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel. Dr. Moffatt's translation gives it most clearly: 'My soul is now disquieted. What am I to say?' In the first sentence, probably a quotation from the

* *The Psychology of the Christian Life.* T. W. Pym. G. H. Doran & Co., N. Y.

Scriptures, Jesus gives expression to a sense of foreboding or depression; this idea is in the second sentence immediately challenged; it is not allowed to become part of Himself. 'What am I to say? Father save me from this hour?' i. e., 'Shall I say—Father save me? Shall I in so doing regard the prospect as unbearable? Shall I contemplate the future as something that I have not the strength to endure?' And then He gives His answer, thereby fixing His mind and will in the right direction: 'Nay, it is something else that has brought me to this hour. I will say, Father, glorify Thy name.' He rejects His own disquietude as a dominant idea in His mind and puts in its place the thought of the majesty and power of God the Father."

III. The Result of the Atonement.

That which is called the atonement, as embracing the suffering and death of Christ, had a twofold result; and while we reject the idea of God's purpose in that suffering, we may trace through it the *eventual victory of His will*, made possible by the loyalty of Jesus.

First, we recognize that the crucifixion did not destroy God's plan for the world in sending Jesus. *That purpose was a demonstration of love toward*

the world. Christ upheld that plan by the manner in which He exhibited the Father's love and by the serenity with which He endured persecution for righteousness' sake. How could one think of faltering or flinching in the face of danger, who had said, "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep"! How could one who had said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," be found wanting in practising the great act itself when the opportunity was presented! Love of that high character was demonstrated all through the passion,—to the disciples for their safety; to the servant wounded by Peter's sword; to the thief upon the cross; to those who crucified Him, in prayer that the Father would forgive them.

Furthermore, it resulted in setting before the world, for all ages, the supreme power of that love as a force stronger than death itself, and the establishment of a continued existence beyond the power of evil to inflict further harm. How perfectly this is expressed in His address to the Jews: "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it up again. No man taketh it from me but *I lay it down of myself.* I have power to lay it down and I have

power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (St. John 10: 17, 18.)

The Character of the Appeal.

"Thy will, not mine, be done," was not a cry of resignation to a mysterious purpose of God, but the *declaration of belief in a Divine Will that would result in victory*. The Father's will might be obscured, rejected, attacked or delayed; but it could not be defeated. "It was not the Passion, but the value of it that He could not see until He caught hints and hopes of it at the very end," writes Dr. Orchard.

IV. God's Plan of Love.

We must recognize that God knew full well the presence of evil in the world and that the Jews had failed in their Divine Mission to make Him known in His true character. While, with their lips, they carried on a system of worship that was almost perfect, their hearts were far from Him. The prophets had striven to bring this truth home to the nation, but they had been rejected. That is why Christ came. "And last of all He sent unto them His son." Everything had been done but the withdrawal of the gift of free will. This would have lowered His Kingship to a level un-

worthy of His nature. The very honor of God demanded that man be permitted to retain his choice of serving or rejecting Him.

The stupendous character of this mission was fully recognized by Jesus. At the very awakening of His consciousness He was confronted by the fact that the greatest evils He had to face were not so much these grosser sins, but the utter *failure of religious leaders* to represent God to the people in His true nature; and then hypocrisy in presenting Him in false aspects. This He saw at the age of twelve years. His aims were to work the works of His Father, to show forth God to the world in human form and in human terms; and secondly, in due time to prove the victory of the spirit of God in man over the world power and all the powers of evil, spiritual as well as material.

Christ's Freedom of Choice.

How and when that was to be done, God left entirely in the hands of Jesus. If He was to suffer privation, persecution, and martyrdom, as prophets had before Him, such suffering as well as the time and place were to be left to the judgment of the Son.

There are several instances in the Gospel rec-

ords where Jesus could easily have suffered martyrdom and died for righteousness' sake, died for men, died for doing good.

The first instance occurred after His sermon in Nazareth, when those who heard His words of rebuke were filled with wrath, "and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and led Him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong." How He eluded them is not made clear. The implication is that He utilized some law with which He was familiar. The fact that He did escape at the time is sufficient. The brief word states: "But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." (St. Luke 4: 28, 29, 30.)

Again as a result of the controversy following the healing of the man born blind, the Jews were ready to stone Him to death for the utterances they termed blasphemous. Nor was this the only time He was in peril of death in this manner and on this charge. "Then the Jews took up stones *again* to stone Him," we read in St. John, 10: 31. "Jesus answered them: many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?"

The controversy continued until, exasperated, the Jews could no longer refrain from killing Him.

"Therefore they sought *again* to take Him, but He escaped out of their hand." (St. John 10:39.)

It might have been thought most appropriate that He should suffer martyrdom in the temple—His Father's house—while engaged in defending His Father's honor. The opportunity presented itself several times but Jesus avoided it. One striking instance is recorded in the latter part of the eighth chapter of St. John, when He had been most sweeping in His denunciation of their failure. "Ye have not known Him, but I know Him and if I should say I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you. But I know Him and keep His saying. . . . Then took they up stones to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." (St. John 8:55, 59.)

That this element of choice was being consciously exercised *continually* by Jesus is brought out very clearly in other parts of St. John's gospel. At one time He would not go to Judea but ministered in Galilee "because the Jews sought to kill Him" (St. John 7:1)—at another time when His brethren urged Him to make Himself known to the world He told them, "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. . . .

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Go ye up unto this feast. I go not yet up unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come." (St. John 7:6-8.)

As we see Him exercising His choice in *avoiding* the violence which would result in His death, so we see Him exercising that same choice in the conscious, voluntary *acceptance* of the time when He intends to avoid it no longer.

This consciousness and resolution finds expression in a note of exultation. Early in the week of His passion He announced to His disciples that "the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." (St. John 12:23.) He repeats this same thought immediately after Judas left the supper table on his mission of betrayal. "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in Him." (St. John 13:31.) *The identical thought forms the introduction to His great prayer after the supper.* "These words spake Jesus and lifted His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may also glorify Thee." (St. John 17:1.)

V. The Prayer in the Garden.

According to St. John's gospel, Jesus, at the conclusion of a very long prayer, which comprises the entire seventeenth chapter, went forth imme-

diately to the Garden where He was betrayed by Judas. St. John does not record any further prayer in the Garden. In the other Gospels there is an account of a prayer in the Garden, which would indicate that Jesus was laying before the Father the ordeal which confronted Him, and asking for final guidance as to His acceptance or rejection of it.

The material content of that prayer in the three synoptists is the same, although there are slight differences in the phrasing, which we note:

In St. Matthew: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. . . . Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." (26:39-42.)

St. Mark: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will but what Thou wilt." (14:36.)

St. Luke: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done." (22:42.)

By this record we see that just prior to the moment of betrayal there existed an element of uncertainty as to time and place. The conviction that He was to perform a great act of perfect

love was clouded momentarily by the great responsibility of personal decision. So He prayed about it in deepest anguish. He knew that He possessed the privilege of choice. He knew circumstances so well that He could have escaped easily. He still would have been the Christ, and the martyrdom could be accepted at a later time. *But He chose it at this time.*

In the bestowal of free will God permits man to choose the time and place for his evil deeds. He did not hinder Judas. If we hold that God had a purpose in placing Jesus on the Cross at *that particular time* and place we must also hold that He *sent* Judas to his horrible task of betrayal. If this be the case we dare no longer regard him as a lost soul but as a servant who faithfully *performed* a very hard task for God. Such a theory is almost unthinkable. Its acceptance would set aside the whole content of our Lord's explicit teaching. Judas exercised *his* gift of free will by voluntarily choosing to become a thief and a betrayer of his Master. The whole plan was worked out by him and the evil men with whom he dealt. God did not interpose and Jesus did not attempt to escape it, although He was aware of the treachery of His friend, as any

clear-minded man is aware of a friend's treachery long before it has definite results.

In like manner God *permits* His chosen, consecrated servants to choose the time and place of doing acts that will show forth His love and His goodness. Surely if so much freedom is permitted to the children of darkness, it should not be thought strange if the children of light exercise as wise a choice and display similar if not greater discernment as to the time and manner in which they shall lend themselves to do what they believe the right thing in God's sight.

God is dependent upon man for the carrying out of His plan, for His good works, for the works that are done according to His will in this world; otherwise He would send angels to perform them, or take away the gift of free will. So He was dependent upon Jesus for the supreme demonstration of His love, and the revelation of His true character.

Jesus of Nazareth finished this battle in flesh and blood, body and soul, upon His knees. He knew that He had done everything within His power to fulfill the first part of His mission. He had worked the works of God, had revealed His

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love and power in bringing health and peace to the bodies and souls of men everywhere. He had exhausted every act that God Himself could perform for His people without doing violence to their wills or inhibiting the power of choice. If there remained any other act or word which might have been of value in inspiring faith in God or belief in His message, Jesus would have avoided the betrayal and set Himself to the task of performing that additional task. But there was none. Therefore He was ready to perform the second part of His mission, embodied in the principle He preached so unmistakably, i. e., to lay down His life, if necessary, that He might demonstrate the perfection of His love for His friends, and prove the superiority of the power of Love over the evil of this world and even over death itself.

Jesus' Will and God's Will.

That will of the Father to which Jesus subordinated His will was a will embodying the Perfect Law of Love. No one knew this stupendous fact so well as He, because the unity with that will had been His guiding passion all His life. Every act of love He performed, every gracious word He uttered, He attributed to the Father.

Although there was in His human nature the instinctive shrinking from violence, torture and physical death, there was *no contest in the Garden between the will of Jesus and the will of God*. It is only the false theology and the unthinking popular interpretation which so presents the scene and which shamefully belittles Christ's knowledge of God's will and dishonors the character of the Father.

It was but the *measurement of His will with the Father's will* as to the completion of His work, and in that completion to rest back in the assurance that the Father's will would be performed.

Jesus could not feel that it was the will of the Father that He should be slain in a brutal manner, any more than we can say that it was through the will of God that the early Christians were tortured and murdered. *Love does not, cannot operate in that manner.*

Jesus therefore arose, *not to do the will of God in meeting a death* which had been planned for Him by the Father, but to show forth *how the will of God, in a demonstration of perfect love, would meet the evil will of men and conquer it*. It is only thus that we gain the full revelation of His prayer. "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done."

VI. The Answered Prayer.

To many it may seem that Christ's prayer was not answered, that there was a contest of wills and that God's will was done, not Christ's, and that He suffered on the Cross because of *unanswered* prayer. Some theologians do not hesitate to point to this incident as an example of unanswered prayer. The popular interpretation presents this dilemma and we cannot escape it.

To consider it so not only dishonors God, but it really prevents a person from properly praying the prayer Jesus prayed, and which, according to His teaching and example, we ought also to pray in the face of evil or great suffering.

The average Christian throughout the world prays that prayer and uses these sacred words in almost the opposite sense. When he desires to be free from some disease, he admits the probability of God's plan for his relief by praying "if it be Thy will." Thus he actually presumes that the will of God may be definitely *opposed* to his relief, and so he resigns himself by accepting the false conclusion, "Not my will but Thine be done." To this phrase also he resorts when stricken with some sudden bereavement, like the accidental death of a dear one.

Thus again he attributes to God, in sending or retaining that evil, a character He does not possess and also a character which Jesus *did not so reveal*.

Jesus prayed a prayer of allegiance to and trust in the will of God; not a prayer of submission or resignation, and that prayer was answered. In the face of a great evil about to befall Him, He prayed, "Thy will be done," and God's will was done! Not in the cruel scourging and nailing to the Cross, but in the revelation to the world, for all time, that the greatest evil could be overcome by love; that love could rise triumphant over the greatest of assaults; that love could conquer even death. "Love is stronger than death."

God's will was done, not because of the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews, but in spite of it.

The Jews, because of their wrath against Jesus, believed they had eliminated a theological disturber, a national trouble maker, and had disposed of Him in a way that would not only end His influence, but serve as a warning to His followers. The whole world now admits the futility of the crucifixion from that standpoint alone, and recognizes that the act served as an *inspiration*

to followers rather than a warning. A great ideal always thrives under persecution.

With all the religious and civil power at their command, the Jewish rulers of the day crushed the Leader and scattered His band. Did ruthless force ever meet such signal defeat? Christ's prayer *was answered*. *God's will was done*. His prayer was that even although He was to undergo physical suffering in holding fast to His great principles, nevertheless "Thy will be done." So we may paraphrase it without the slightest violence or undue liberty. "Thy great goodness and perfect love will in some way be shown through and beyond this tragedy. And also grant that I may reflect Thy will during the treatment I am to receive at the hands of wicked men. This thought shall be in me as I go out to suffer: I shall show forth to all those who hate me and harm me, the character of Thy will expressed in acts and words of love."

He was to show all this in the crucifixion; not on the Cross that *God sent*, but on the Cross that *He accepted, from the hands of evil men*. Do not think we take anything from the glory of the Cross of Jesus by removing it from God's hand. We add to it tenfold and give it a higher value.

Love spurned and rejected would not flee;

Love betrayed would still be loyal and true; Love cursed would bless; Love tortured and abused would use His failing breath to plead to the Father for the forgiveness of the beloved; Love done to physical death would live on, for Love's sake!

"Having loved, He loved unto the end"; to the very gate of death. There Love was to enter and triumph, even over the darkness of the tomb, for the benefit of the beloved!

Thus the wondrous glory of the Cross is revealed. It is those who teach and believe *God sent* it, who strip it of its great truth.

VII. Loss Through Misinterpretation.

Many conventional religious teachers, unfortunately, with much sincere piety, speak of bearing one's cross in the form of a loathsome disease, a distressing deformity, a chronic painful ailment, a sick and aged relative, a hasty temper, etc., etc. (Such allusions may be found in many devotional books!) Thus while cross-bearing is linked with one's experience, its value is shattered because of the false emphasis placed on this sacred act. In no sense is there the slightest authority for this classification. Under this teaching, some sufferers resign themselves, as accepting God's will, to

hopeless invalidism; others accept the teaching, and because it comes from a theologian, their hearts are turned in bitterness against such an unjust, unloving God.

Thus, in both instances, the whole value of the great spiritual battle Jesus fought and the great vision He had of God, is lost. To both classes the truth would have been of infinite help. It might have brought physical relief to the one and saved the other from atheism.

Not until a Christian accepts this true interpretation is he enabled to pray that prayer as Jesus prayed it. The false interpretation gives it an entirely different character and he is prevented from linking himself with God and God's will, as Jesus linked Himself.

The popular prayer is the *reverse of the truth* as it represents God as a wrathful, punishing Father, who brings about or maintains an evil condition that *some mysterious good* may eventually result, the outcome of which is hidden from human eyes and is contrary to human desires. This renders Love repugnant and because of this interpretation thousands have been driven from God.

Thus the Garden Prayer was answered, and on the Cross the Father's will was done and was dis-

played to the world, not in sacrificing a Son, but in proving the power of love over the power of evil, by virtue of the co-operation of the Son with His will—a human will—linked with the Divine will.

Following Christ's thought, therefore, the Christian can pray: first—"Thy will be done in spite of the awful evidence of evil forces I see around me or obstructing me"; and secondly—"Thy will be done to me rather than my own will. Therefore, let me reflect Thy will. I know that if I trust Thy will and remain loyal to Thee, I shall receive comfort and strength in the knowledge that the apparent victory of evil is really defeat of evil. Thy will is Perfect Love, and Power, and All-Good, and will be victorious if I hold fast to it and follow its leading. With Thee I shall pass through the evil, rise above it and conquer it. Love is stronger than death."

VIII. The Refusal to Compromise.

Practically all of the difficulty that has obscured this truth and shrouded it in unpleasant mystery will disappear when we recognize that one, so completely filled with the knowledge of the will of God as Jesus, *could not possibly be mistaken* in the character of that will; nor were there

any grounds upon which He could base a thought that it was His Father's will for Him to be offered as a sacrifice. In all the many words He gave us of the character and operation of the Father's will we can find no sentence that would justify us in thinking that there was any place in that will for such a demand.

The whole prayer in the Garden revolved upon the time, place and manner of *performing the will of God* to the limit of His capacity. Jesus felt that He had been called to perform a great *voluntary sacrifice in defending a principle*. He knew it was coming and had long been preparing Himself for the great crucial test. He knew that as God had given Him the vision of that principle of unselfish love, so God would bestow upon Him the strength to be loyal in the face of the greatest opposition.

That vision required of Him not only the ministry to the poor, the healing of the sick, and the many acts of tender mercy toward those who were like sheep having no shepherd, but it demanded (1) fearless preaching to scorers, (2) denunciation of hypocrisy among the religious leaders and (3) condemnation of material unrighteousness and shallow temple worship.

This work required great courage on His part,

not only because of the opposition of the powers of evil in all classes arrayed against Him, but because of the desertion of His friends, the disapproval of those nearest Him. His relatives thought Him mentally unbalanced.

Because He had been brave and true and would make no compromise, He faced physical extinction, and the dissolution of His group of disciples. Logically, it seemed as if it were a reckless sacrifice of all that had been built up. All who believed on Him might lose faith and hope. In spite of their protestations of fealty to Him, He knew they would desert Him if a serious crisis arose. It did seem like taking terrible chances to accept the issue in such a public way, and in a manner which He felt would terminate so disgracefully.

He bravely prayed and God answered the prayer in revealing to Him that it was the time to stand fast and accept the issue.

Many think those words were weak words of meek submission to an awful ordeal being imposed upon Him by an inexorable God. Nothing so contradicts the truth. "Thy will be done," was said *not in resignation, but in determination*.

There was never any other thought in his mind than that of fitting Himself for perfect instru-

mentality in the performance of God's will. He was consumed with this sacred passion. His expression of God's will was to be so perfect that He was to say to men the *very words that God would say* and to act the way *that God would act* toward men under all conditions. Here He was to be given the opportunity to shew forth God's perfect love toward man. It was the supreme act of Perfect Love in the face of rejection. If man's love were to be forced, Perfect Love would fail. Vengeance or violence of any kind would be foreign to the character of Perfect Love. Man's harm would be self-inflicted. It would be the horrible loss sustained by refusal to accept the offering of Divine Love.

Jesus stayed to have God's will carried through in Him, and fought such a fight as the world never before saw. He gave men the most supreme exhibition of combined moral and physical courage possible for a human being, and which may be approximated only by those who, possessing all means to escape, stand and fight, forgetful of self, to show forth that greater love which offers itself for others and for Truth's sake.

In after centuries, Christian martyrs fought that fight and won, doing God's will because of

their refusal to compromise with the evil power of evil men, who offered them physical life as a reward.

He who draws any theory of simple-minded, non-resistance from that scene fails to glimpse the glory of the struggle and misses all the grandeur and inspiration of that most bravely fought conquest.

Let him who desires to experience the character of that battle struggle upon his knees with the thought of a compromise with the forces of evil in high places!

This heroic aspect of Jesus in the Garden is not a mere fancy. It is fully supported by a significant incident related only in St. John's account of the actual betrayal. As they came upon Him they found no cringing, submissive fanatic, in attitude of surrender; but a brave man, commanding and unafraid, and, moreover, ready to meet them. The nobility and dignity of His bearing astounded them. As they were about to seize Him, the very majesty and power of His presence awed them. They suddenly became aware of a strength never before encountered and "they went backward and

fell to the ground." (St. John 18:6.) Nor were they able to recover themselves for some time, so intense was the radiating force of His Goodness. Virtue carries with it a tremendous protective power. The guards were so bewildered that St. Peter was given ample opportunity to smite with his sword. The command of Jesus to use it no more and His action in healing the wounded soldier brought the guards to their senses. If they were not to be smitten and consumed by this strange power which awed them and which they could not understand, they could go about their work and use the only power they did understand—physical force. Then they took Him. The disciples were still dim of vision and fettered by material fears. They had not yet found the power of the spirit so they fled—save one.

The law of love had been put in active operation in a manner never before seen in the world. God's way of dealing with evil was being manifested. "Do good unto them that persecute you." They did not understand those words, did not believe they could be put into practice. *He was proving to them that they could.*

Later they blindfolded Him and then smote Him, yet He refused to use any of His power to

avoid these insults or to repay in kind. Even the world applauds the duelist who permits his enemy to fire upon him, and then discharges his pistol in the air. Such magnanimity reveals the true victor and a man of great courage. The exhibition of Jesus was even more magnanimous and self-controlled; and brave to the last degree. It was an exhibition of how man could fight for the right and win against all the riches, the power, the forces, and hatred of political and ecclesiastical enemies in the world. *The only weapon He used was consecrated love.* That was the problem He fought out in the Garden; that was the cause of His deep searching into His own soul and into the mind and will of God. When He felt that in this crisis He had placed His will in harmony with the Father's will He arose to follow that will at any personal cost and in the face of what would appear to be failure and defeat.

Therefore we cannot comprehend the content of that prayer until we see in it, *not a wail of submission, but a shout of triumph!* It comprises the declaration of an unfailing trust in the power of God's will to overcome, eventually, the evil forces that beset us. It is not significant of failure but of victory with God.

HIS WILL BE DONE.

By *Annie Johnson Flint*.

"His Will be done," we say with sighs and trembling;
 Expecting trial, bitter loss and tears;
 And then how doth He answer us with blessings,
 In sweet rebuking of our faithless fears.

God's Will is peace and plenty and the power
 To be, and have, the best that He can give;
 A mind to serve Him and a heart to love Him;
 The *faith* to die with and the *strength* to live.

It means for us—all good, all grace, all glory;
 His kingdom coming and on earth begun,
 Why should we fear to say "His Will—His righteous,
 His tender, loving, joyous Will—be done?"

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

Note 1.

In that most inspiring book, *The Christ That is to Be* (Macmillan & Co.), Lily Dougal presents very clearly an aspect of the subject treated in the preceding chapter. It appears in the chapter on "Physical Power," in which she shows how divergent in many respects are the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of the Churches. She faults the Church for her failure to insist upon universal friendship, for her willingness to use the sword, etc., etc. Then comes the conclusion which shows the secret of the fault. She writes:

"The reason of all this is that, in defiance of the gospel, the Church has never conceived of God as commonly moving in man's material affairs except as the cause of inexplicable disaster or merited punishment. 'Thy will be done,' has been a wail, instead of a shout of joyful expectation. God has deserved better of us in nature, and a thousand times better in the revelation of Christ; and yet our saddest hymns, our most melancholy moods, have for their refrain the sentiment, 'God's will be done'; and we regard 'resignation' to woe as the highest attainment of the soul before God. This is true of the Church in the land of Luther, the nation of Knox, the city of Calvin, the continent of the Pilgrim Fathers, as it is in those regions to which the Greek, Roman, or Anglican Churches desire to give exclusive light. In none of these branches of the Church does the acceptance of God's will suggest any temporal advantage; the sentiment that 'the visitation of God' is direful, is writ large, not only in the liturgies, but in the legal forms, of Christendom."

Note 2.

In his chapter entitled "The Social Interpretation of the Cross"* Dr. Orchard presents the

* *"The Safest Mind Cure."* Allen. London.

subject with great clarity and inspiring strength. "Theories of atonement," he says, "have not only proved unable to solve the problem; they have often been found the greatest hindrance to the acceptance of the Cross." He analyzes the various theological and moral theories regarding them in turn and summarizes as follows:

"It is not surprising that the failure of all these theories should have given rise to the impression that the whole idea of atonement is wrong. It is traced to a false notion that God needs placation, to the survival of the value of sacrifice for that purpose, and to the magical virtue once believed to reside in blood."

Two later paragraphs in this chapter will be helpful. They are as follows:

"The Gospels are being studied as they never were before. The days of negative and niggling criticism are now over, and the life of Jesus is being seen in clear outline and His purpose made more intelligible. The necessity of Christ's death is being found neither in an eternal decree that the Son of God must die to save mankind, nor in some mystical necessity for sacrifice to which Christ surrendered; but primarily in purely mundane and political circumstances.

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“Theologians have tried to find the necessity of the Cross in God; in His refusal to let man off without a price; in His moral inability to forgive without someone being punished; or in His instinct towards sacrifice; all of them most unsatisfactory. But when it is traced to human sin, blindness and resistance, the necessity of the Cross is understood. Jesus had to die because of what man is. Theologians need not propound some penal or mystical theory.”

CHAPTER IV.

BASIS OF THE MISINTERPRETATION.

WHAT a glorious vista of the Christian life Jesus opened by His great courage and inspiring example, viewed from the aspect of a battle won—a triumph of love. What possibilities of strength are revealed to man! Yet man has interpreted this act in a manner that spells weakness to him. The very purpose of Jesus is reversed. This is one of the greatest tragedies the world has ever known; and millions have been victims of that tragedy because they have not known the truth. God's whole purpose and character have been misinterpreted. Truth and light have been darkened.

For centuries Christian men and women have believed that all sickness and death, even accidental, were the will of God; and in proportion as that belief was held, so they deprived themselves of the power and strength and health that they could have received if they placed themselves truly in harmony with the will of God. They felt

it a pious duty to accept a disease or great sorrow from Him, and so were unable to discern the Loving Will that yearned to lift that disease and sorrow from them.

No religious thralldom has ever been so deadly, so destructive as this, and it all may be traced to the theologians and church teachers of all centuries, who, *with the best of intentions*, with most pious minds, have continued to fasten and maintain this doctrine which is so opposed to the teaching of the Master.

Throughout this book the cause of these misinterpretations will be clearly seen, but a summary will be helpful at this point.

The Hebraic Conception.

A. This of course is fundamental. It is seen in various parts of the Gospel records. The longing for a Messiah who would set up a kingdom on earth was so deeply seated that the closest followers could not rid themselves of this ideal. After the Ascension it came back with tremendous force and for several generations practically all Christians were anticipating it during their lifetime. The reported words of Jesus, containing His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, in being copied, were confused with conceptions of

the second coming, and this confusion stands in the record today. These accounts in St. Matt. 24; St. Mark 13, and St. Luke 17:20, were eagerly looked forward to during the first century. In subsequent centuries whenever there have been unusual astronomical occurrences or very great wars, many Christians have looked upon them as signs of His coming. During the last great war, only a few years ago, this was preached in innumerable churches of all denominations all over the world. Several sects, comprising millions of followers, are founded on this doctrine and from time to time prepare themselves for His visible return; only to be disappointed and locate the time at some later year.

That is the effect of only one Hebraic idea upon the Christian world. There are many others. Important among them is the doctrine of predestination and fore-ordination, which appears all through the Epistle to the Romans. See particularly the ninth chapter and compare the Hebraic God revealed there with the Loving Father revealed by Jesus in the Gospels.

B. The Hebraic conception also comes out very naturally in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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This epistle was unquestionably of great value in reconciling questioning Jews to the teachings of Jesus, but it never should have been permitted to color and even distort the faith of those who were not Jews. Yet innumerable phrases have been stripped of their context in this epistle and made to figure in doctrine in a manner unwarranted by any exercise of common sense. In many Christian prayers for those in sorrow we are reminded that God "*made* the Captain of their salvation (Jesus) perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:10.) Following the Hebrew system of sacrifices, Jesus is set forth as the final and highest *type of sacrifice required by God*; thus bringing to an end the Jewish system. There is hardly a prayer for the sick or the suffering to be found in any of the printed books of devotion of all denominations that does not refer to the phrase in Hebrews (12:6)—"whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." It is easy to explain that the word means "training," as a child is trained, but the idea of real suffering, a scourging from His hand in token of mysterious love, is fixed in the average mind.

I do not intend this summary to be exhaustive, but only suggestive.

St. Paul's Theology.

St. Paul had the idea of the second coming firmly fixed in his mind and as he grew older he changed his opinion and warned his followers not to look for it. His work was a glorious one but we must bear in mind the fact that he wrote to certain classes and for people in a certain period. This subject is expanded in a later section.

Hymns and Devotional Books.

In many places what theological teaching suggested, hymn writers completed; and by poetic phrases, aided by an appealing harmony, implanted forever upon the minds, hearts and very souls of men and women, the doctrine of God's will and God's love being shown in suffering or death, and more particularly in His demand for the sacrifice of the Son.

Cross-Bearing.

Finally we see the tremendous confusion of thought developing to the extent that sickness and suffering and death are included in "cross-bearing." One devotional writer of considerable repute does not hesitate to include such things as "an irritable temper," "an inherited bodily weakness,"

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“a sick and troublesome relative” as “*crosses which we must have to bear.*”

How the true message of the Cross is utterly blotted out by such utter absurdities as these! How the beauty of that supreme act is reduced to the commonplace!

CHAPTER V.

THE TRUE MEANING.

I. Suffering and the Cross.

AS we try to determine why the thought of suffering in every form is so closely linked with God, we see by very simple analysis that it begins with the words in the Garden, is connected with all the incidents of the passion, and leads to the Cross.

Placed in this sacred atmosphere, and colored by the thought of a great redeeming love and sacrifice, sickness, deformities and minor evils, of which I have spoken, are given a dignity to which they are by no means entitled. A character is bestowed upon them for which no reason can be found in the teaching of Jesus. To designate any one of such evils as "a cross" is a false consolation, although one may take comfort in so doing; but the result is in many ways disastrous, as it seems to fasten on a person a disease or difficulty,

which, if the teaching of Jesus were practised, could be removed. This teaching sprang largely from devotional writers drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of cloistered "religious" of both sexes, and who were influenced by the theory that there was a distinct enmity between the soul and the body, and that mortification of the flesh was a virtue in itself. Adherents to this school of religious thought insisted upon taking literally the metaphor "crucify the flesh." Some saints longed so earnestly to bear the sufferings of Christ that they reproduced in their hands signs of the nail prints, inflamed, swollen and bleeding. In their day such evidences of piety were considered miraculous. Modern psychology and physiology show us plainly that these were but the natural results of intense auto-suggestion.

While little theology of this character is written now, the better known devotional books are still sold in large quantities and this doctrine finds a prominent place in the instruction in all denominations. It is the conventional and easiest thing in the world for a minister to keep referring to the "cross" in pointing out how to bear sickness, sorrow and other ills, and of all acts in religion it is the most "unthinking" thing to do.

The Confusion of the Question.

During my early efforts in the healing work, I wrote to a clergyman whom in my younger days I had considered a wise leader. I sent him the literature of the "Society of the Nazarene," with our prayers for the sick, and asked for his criticism and advice. His reply was as follows:

"It is hard for me to give you a criticism of the Rule and Prayers of your Society as I am so ignorant of the question. My feeling is that there is a tendency in our day to look upon suffering as the only evil, to be got rid of at all cost, and that *awakens a mistrust in the various schemes of amelioration*. This is unreasonable. *The Cross, to my mind, means the sanctification and glorification of suffering, and we must have to bear suffering in the power of and for the love of Christ*. Christ did not get down from the cross to convince men that He was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, but rather by remaining on the cross He showed Himself to be divine, and accomplished the work of salvation."

Here we see a perfect illustration of the confusion of sickness with suffering on the Cross. To him they seemed incapable of separation.

What this man wrote regarding *suffering* is per-

fectly true. Every true Christian must know something of the affliction or reproach of the Gospels, and rejoice in being permitted to participate in it; but the subject of *disease* does not come under that head and the two ideas cannot be combined.

To suffer deep sorrow because of the sins of others; to bear patiently persecution, misunderstanding, and contempt and privation, because of our allegiance to the Master, is one side; and to suffer through an assault of sickness is an entirely different matter. With the former there is a certain suffering that lies within the choice of man's will to accept for Christ's sake, for the sake of his brothers; or he may reject it, and be free from it. With the latter there is no such choice. A condition which is repulsive and evil is imposed upon man, often without any fault or wrong doing or even ignorance on his part. To me it is incredible that any such visitation or accident is to be attributed to the will of God or considered as having been designed or sent by Him with a view toward chastening or strengthening one. He does not visit any of His lower creatures with disease in order to strengthen them.

Some draw a pretty illustration of the pearl being the result of disease on the oyster. Others

speaking of iron being refined in the fire. We should remember that the objects of these illustrations comprise in the one case a very low form of life and in the other an inanimate object. They are figures of speech, but some expect human beings to take them literally.

If God does not purposely visit lower animals with disease for their development, why should we credit Him with such action toward the human race, whose capacity for suffering is much more keen? Such a plan is not in accordance with the purpose and will of God, who abhors disease and disorder. His hand is no more seen in the plague than it is in the catastrophe in which hundreds of young and innocent lives are blotted out, horrible injuries inflicted, and victims made hideous cripples and invalids for the remainder of their days.

Having been stricken by disease or accident, however, I may prove the value of my Christianity by "*suffering as a Christian*" and, because of my faith in Christ and my belief in God's Omniscience, I may turn the incident into an *opportunity for spiritual strength*. So long as my head is clear I will not humbly resign myself to my sickness with a falsely contented idea of a Fatherly "visitation," mysteriously planned for some object

which may never be revealed to me; nor shall I pray as did one of the old saints—that his pains be not relieved so that he could continue to “suffer with Christ.” This is purely a warped and distorted view of God’s purpose. Of such morbid and fallacious reasoning the mind of man has had enough; the Church has already borne the burden of such thinking far too long; and it is time for every Christian man, woman and child to rid himself of it forever.

The more fully I consider the character of sickness as a healthy minded Christian, the more I realize that it is foreign to God’s intention to prolong it, but rather it is His will that the sickness be overcome, the disorder readjusted, and that perfect health be restored, as soon as possible. The entire mechanism of the body with its regiments of phagocytes and disease-battling elements, and the latent forces that are called into action in time of crises, and the marvellous recuperative powers, prove all this. The drugless cures, the rest cures supervised by physicians, and the mental therapy of the day, support this position. A keen comprehension of these facts can hardly fail to have its value in assisting in the restoration of health.

This condition again is different from the very

popular "Gospel of Health" which really erects Health as the supreme goal to be attained if not actually worshipped. To followers of this cult, the presence of disease necessarily indicates evil or "error" as it is called. The same Christian can see many very healthy persons in whom there exists an enormous amount of sin and error, and on the other hand, some very unhealthy ones, whose unhappy conditions are the result of no fault of their own, but have been occasioned by the ignorance, sin, or carelessness of others, or by some unforeseen violence of the elements. Some, by their patience and courage, show forth glorious lives of great value to the world. But let not anyone say that he suffers under the hand of God's visitation, for to so speak is to reveal a totally false conception of the goodness of God, of His tenderness and love and His ever-burning desire for the health and happiness of all of His children both in body and soul.

I have no sympathy whatsoever, on the one hand, for those modern Christians who make a God of their health, nor on the other hand, for those who bestow upon pain and suffering, resulting from disease, the character of a sacrament. Such assumption is not only unwarranted but is in opposition to the teachings of Jesus.

II. Jesus Accepting Suffering.

Jesus did suffer great bodily pain on the Cross, but it was inflicted by the "hands of cruel and sinful men," as He foretold. It is because I refuse to permit those in the Church who are opposing the work of healing to infer that they have a greater regard for these sufferings than we do, that I desire to make the issue still clearer. I do not want to minimize suffering or to gloss it over; I want to restore it rather to the true place in which it belongs. I want to take away the doctrinal trappings which have marred its real beauty and obscured its real message.

The clergyman referred to in the preceding section said, "Jesus did not come down from the Cross." How familiar that sounds. At the foot of the Cross they said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." The confusion of thought in the minds of the Jews is not different from the confusion in the minds of many Christians.

How He Saved Others.

Jesus indeed saved others, but not from such predicament in which He found Himself. He saved others (1) physically, who were bound with disease, sickness and mental infirmities; and (2)

spiritually, who were in bondage to an evil will or sinful desires. He saved them by restoring health and wholeness to bodies and minds in proportion to their faith in His word; and He saved them from their sins, by pronouncing forgiveness and bringing them back to conscious union with God. He indeed saved them, wonderfully.

But nowhere did He ever promise His disciples immunity from physical suffering, *such as He was undergoing*; nor gave He any hint that He would save them from attack or violent death. On the contrary, He pointed out that their fidelity, as disciples, would most likely result in persecution and death. He told them about prophets who had been slain. He told them they would be hated for His name's sake, not by the poor and ignorant but by the leaders in high places in their synagogues. This persecution was to be carried on in the name of God. He made this very clear to them in His last talk with them. "These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." (St. John 16:1-2.) The disciple is not to think he is above the Master. "If they have persecuted me they will persecute you." "If they have done

these things to a green tree what shall be done to a dry." When this persecution comes they are to rejoice and be exceeding glad, because of previous persecution of true prophets. St. Luke adds that He told them when persecution came they were to "leap for joy."

Jesus did not save John the Baptist from persecution and death. John died for righteousness' sake as other prophets had died before him. Moreover, he was in deep spiritual fellowship with Jesus. He saw truth in the light of God. Sin in a king's palace was the same as sin in the street and because of his preaching he was imprisoned. He met death because of his refusal to compromise. He died for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Jesus knew of his danger and of his death. He did not save John, because the latter valued spiritual liberty more than physical liberty.

In spite of the clear-cut issue which resulted in the Baptist's death, there are some theologians who actually present this case of "suffering" as an evidence *against the restoration of the healing ministry*. They seem unable to discriminate between suffering by disease, and suffering through persecution, in spite of their totally different character. Thus they render themselves blind to this

great teaching of Jesus and so fail to present it to others.

Jesus did save Himself from everything from which He saved others. He maintained a body in perfect health. There is only the mention of physical weariness, which is natural to prolonged work and prayer. He maintained His union with God by His consecration and constant conscious knowledge of God's love and presence. He had perfect poise of body and soul. He *had* saved Himself in every way as He had saved others.

Had Jesus come down from the Cross He would have failed to follow the very precepts He had preached; He would have set at naught the wonderful examples He had praised on the part of the prophets. He would have emptied of their meaning all the principles He urged upon His disciples as being the highest evidence of their love for God and truth.

The action of Jesus in accepting the persecution and in remaining on the Cross does not glorify sickness and suffering of any kind, whether through loathsome disease or violence that springs from accident, sin or ignorance. It represents fidelity to a principle; a refusal to com-

promise with truth, even at the cost of a life. It is a battle for Right, for God and His Cause, and with God's great weapon—Love.

"There then, in the loving endurance of persecution," writes Miss Dougal, "was the way that everyone who would advance the Kingdom must pass, until the Kingdom be universal. . . . This does not prove there is anything divine in suffering; it proves that love is divine."

The Real Suffering.

I have tried to show that rather than reading any of the "suffering" out of the example of Jesus on the Cross, I have, on the contrary, endeavored to set forth that suffering in its true light; revealing its true value by disassociating it from the conventional conceptions. I desire to make the character of suffering in the life of Jesus even plainer, so that His words and examples may have full meaning for those who need the guidance of His example today.

The suffering of Jesus is conventionally limited to the passion and crucifixion. Really this period marks but the climax. At the very beginning of His ministry He suffered physically and mentally in the temptation to establish the Kingdom by some form of compromise with worldly or purely

materialistic standards. He suffered rejection in His home village of Nazareth. Even His relatives and closest associates did not believe in Him. He suffered terribly, not only because of the lack of vision of God on the part of the leaders of the temple, but of their bitter hatred of His work in revealing the character of the Father to them. How He suffered because of the blindness of the people, who like sheep without a shepherd were afraid to follow Him! Probably the most poignant of His sufferings was to *know* the way to the peace and happiness of a people, to offer it, and have them refuse to accept it. What a great inner grief must have swept over Him when He beheld the city and saw what the future held for it and from what He could have saved it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not!" (St. Matt. 23:37.)

There was suffering in the betrayal of Judas, and in the foreknowledge of the weakness of His disciples in time of the great crisis.

There was a rich experience in suffering endured throughout because of His determination

to permit nothing to cause Him to deviate one step from His purpose to reveal God in His true character as perfect Love, and establish a kingdom on earth, in which men might dwell together in peace and joyous fellowship. He saw into the hearts of men and knew the power of materialism and selfishness. He saw that allegiance to Him and His teaching would penetrate and jeopardize the most intimate of relationships. Father would turn against son, the daughter against her mother; a man's foes shall be those of his own household. How soon in the early days these words were fulfilled. Rejection and betrayal by dearest relatives were among the commonest sufferings of the early Christians.

It is not difficult to find instances of this character today. Nor is it difficult to find in many Houses dedicated to God's honor, teachers of traditional mould, who present that which dishonors Him and obstructs His truth, and is in opposition to the teaching of Jesus.

They will teach that sickness, death, disease, even poverty, is part of God's will for man, and link it with the suffering on the Cross as a proof. But they ignore the true suffering which means loss of friends, loss perhaps of position, loss perhaps of material things, for a great principle—

for righteousness' sake, for His name's sake. For such suffering the Master says "Rejoice and be glad." "Jesus strictly enjoined upon every disciple resignation to such suffering as has a direct saving effect upon the world—the bearing of reproach and tyranny in the spirit of love," writes Miss Dougal. "He does not say that men who will not endure this redemptive pain must not count themselves His disciples; He says they *cannot* be His disciples."

His Example for Us.

Let us then summarize: The only time when we have any right to say that we are bearing a cross with Him, or that we are emulating His sufferings, is when we are truly undergoing suffering for the sake of right or truth—for some issue upon which our vision is clear. We all know how these opportunities have been presented to us and how we have avoided them for fear of what they might cost us. And when we have been the gainer by such avoidance, in our hearts we know we have been the loser. We have the choice of rejecting or accepting as He did. We also have the privilege of delaying the issue at times as He did, but in so doing we must not let our vision for truth be blurred. We must realize that if the

issue continues to be forced upon us we are going to stand fast and face it, at any cost, as He did. Then, and then only, can we, *dare we*, lay claim to the privilege of participating in His sufferings and sharing in "cross-bearing" with the Master.

Then and then only can we be linked with the will of God in what we undergo. It is the will of God that we do right, that we stand for the right and suffer for it if need be. Consequently we are perfectly linked with the will of God and we can pray, "Not my will (in avoiding this further) but Thy will (supporting me in the right) be done."

How God's will and love shone through all the suffering of Jesus on the Cross! It was by that magnificent demonstration of love that He won the hearts of so many who could not see the truth before.

We may fail to reach many by kind words and by our teaching, but, by the way in which we bear persecution and calumny, we may bring many to God. That is the opportunity of the Cross!

Reason for Decay.

Many Christian congregations are in a state of decay today. That which should represent power within them is weakness, because they have

failed not only to catch the truth of the Master, but they have perverted it. They have hesitated at losing some little thing for Him, when He asks them to be willing to lose their very life that they might find it. Whenever anyone loses anything for Him, there is a strengthening joy that comes from such a loss or suffering which more than compensates. It makes the loss a gain—it takes from the suffering its sting and brings an inner peace, for it unites us with the very forces of God and enables us to understand the paradox of the Master when He said: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." When this comes to us we taste of the fruits of true discipleship.

Jesus did not try to lead His followers into a fool's paradise, where nothing could possibly harm them. He saw there was much evil in the world and in men's hearts. He foresaw difficulties for His friends and it was because of His deep love that He prepared them for their trials, assuring them of the close abiding companionship of Himself and the spirit of God who was to guide them. "In the world ye shall have tribulation. . . . But be of good cheer."

Some Christians have been filled with resentment against God for permitting evil, or sending

sorrows upon them. Others have actually rejected God and have given up their church because of this teaching by ministers. Thus we see that the false teaching regarding God's will in suffering has driven children from Him, whereas the teachings of Jesus, under the same conditions, would have drawn them closer to God, and given them the strength to bear and overcome. Jesus taught us how suffering of any kind may be borne with an inner peace, which comes to all who find God as He revealed Him.

The same is true of sickness or physical trouble of any kind. In placing God behind it as author of disease or death, one deprives himself of the most effective therapeutic power known to man. It is a recuperative power which fills man's entire being when he complies with the conditions of union with God, when he knows that God loves him and desires him to be well, as Jesus taught. It leads to cleansing of heart and casting out of fear. Under such conditions healing follows quickly.

As Jesus contemplates so many of His children suffering under various ills, un comforted because of bitter sorrows, scattered here and there, yearning to be fed with food for their souls and with-

out the relief, the joy, the health and peace His word could so easily bring to them, can we not hear Him say in deepest love and pity:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . and ye would not.”

III. How We May Use These Words.

Because we say that these most wonderful words of our Lord have been grossly misinterpreted and therefore misunderstood and wrongly used, we do not by any means infer that they should be looked upon as useless for our purposes or that they should be limited to mere incidents in His own life. Practically everything that Jesus uttered has a universal meaning and reveals an attitude toward God which should be utilized for the teaching and guidance of every disciple. We should pray that prayer as He did, but in the hour of our spiritual battles only. It is a gross distortion to use it in time of disease, physical pain or catastrophe as it attributes the cause of such disorder to God; and even when we use it in time of great spiritual battle, when we may be facing perhaps physical attack as He was, loss of many things dear to us, persecution, calumny, or what seems to spell defeat in the eyes of our nearest ones,—even under such conditions we cannot say

“Thy will be done” in the sense that all of the sorrow that is to follow, all of the pain and anguish that we may have to undergo, are *part of God’s plan* for us and that He has so willed it; and in so saying we are but submitting to His will. To have this attitude is to lose the whole glory of the Truth revealed in those words and we fail to pray that prayer aright as He taught us. He prayed His prayer, “Let this cup pass from me,” and He did not shrink from the agony He knew He was facing. Then He changed the petition at once to an exclamation of wondrous faith, “Nevertheless, . . .—Thy will be done.” In other words, no matter what I face or undergo, “may Thy will be done,—may Thy will and all of Thy great love and power be revealed.”

Many a pious minister has failed in his discipleship because of his failure to follow the precept of his Master in this respect as he has stood in a Gethsemane of his own. He has seen his enemies, and enemies of the Lord, growing stronger and he has avoided the issue, or he has compromised or has resigned and gone elsewhere from parish to parish defending himself with the statement that he must find a place where he can work more freely and more happily. He has contented himself with the utterance of the blessed

prayer, "Thy will be done" in the sick room and houses of sorrow, *where he had no right to use it*, and has failed to apply it to his own spiritual battles, *where it would have become a victorious power for him, and for God's glory*.

He has taught some poor woman to pray that prayer when her husband is brought home dead but he has not learned to pray that glorious prayer himself and to teach others to pray it in time of persecution, in the *only way* that it can be prayed and used. This is the way the Master taught us.

It is because the leaders of the Church have not only misinterpreted this glorious prayer but have failed to use it in the right sense, that the average Christian has failed to get the strength and help that would come with its proper understanding and use, and has found life empty in time of trouble or disaster and has not known how to fight a spiritual battle with great spiritual weapons, in time of need. The use of this prayer in the proper way in our Christian lives is the staking of everything,—all,—upon the will of God and knowing we will win even though we may be facing the loss of so-called "friends," material possessions and even life itself. Such is the vision the Master opened to us and it is ever the vision of power and victory. Once we glimpse it we can

go forward and face a horde of enemies with a calm and courageous spirit.

When we compromise when a principle is at stake we may seem to hold the good opinion of our friends even if they praise us for having complied with their wishes, but secretly they despise us as a "weakling." When we stand firm and lose the apparent friendship of those whom we love they may not hesitate to condemn us openly, but secretly they honor us and even though they may do us great damage and cause us loss, they realize that *they are the losers and that we have won*. Only when such a vision is ours, as it was the vision of Jesus, can we truly exclaim: "Not my will but Thy will be done!" And God's will is always done when we pray that prayer out of a full heart, completely surrendered to Him.

CHAPTER VI.

LOSING THE LORD'S PRAYER.

SO commonly accepted has been the misinterpretation of the Garden Prayer, that the words "Thy will be done," used daily in the Lord's Prayer, are given the same unfortunate meaning: i.e., submission to trouble, rather than an aspiration to power. This great prayer was given by Jesus to His disciples and outlines the fundamental principles to be observed by them in communication with God. It embraces acknowledgment of Deity, personal relationship, adoration, petitions for needs of body and soul, and praise. In spite of the division in the early church and the development of modern sects and denominations, it still remains the one prayer universally used by all Christians.

It is safe to say that until very recent years, the wonderful phrase "Thy will be done" has carried with it the thought of God's mysterious power and our acceptance of almost *anything* that might happen to us, as an expression of His will.

It might be something good, but in the main the thought was that even though it brought pain or unhappiness, it must be accepted as from Him. Here also Christians have been led astray by a false theology.

This meaning was far from the mind of Jesus. He meant exactly the opposite. He knew that the will of God was behind only the good, the joyous, the healthful things of life and He wanted men to pray therefore that God's will be done. In spite of any Old Testament texts to the contrary, God is not the author of evil. He gives only good gifts, perfect gifts, and in Him is no shadow or variableness of turning. The authority for this is not the modern radicalism or my individual opinion, but the simple teaching of Jesus.

Further, in order to get the aspect of trouble or suffering from that phrase one has to strip it from its context. This many have carelessly done, using it as a separate sentence standing alone, and the result, morally and spiritually, has been tragic. Hope was placed in their hand, they transformed it into despair. In both of the records of the Lord's prayer in the Gospels the construction in this particular is the same. Jesus said "Thy will be done in earth, as it is (done) *in heaven*." (St. Matt. 6:10.) It is not a phrase by itself but is

connected with the performance of that will *in heaven*. In St. Luke, the construction is changed so that this point is given particular emphasis. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." (St. Luke 11:2.) We are indebted to St. Luke for placing this point beyond dispute.

Jesus sets up the picture of the perfect exercise of God's will in heaven and prays that such a condition may be realized upon earth.

What is our conception of heaven and what means have we for glimpsing anything regarding the operation of the Divine Will there?

It would require volumes to present the various pictures of "heaven" that theologians, poets, visionaries and even modern spiritualists have reproduced. Many of them are expansions of earthly joys and deeper expressions of human relationships, often most pathetically limited.

For the present purpose, I shall go no further than ask that heaven be accepted as a spiritual kingdom, the beauties and joys of which shall be supreme in their perfection and only spiritually sensed. Above all it will be the realm of God's unveiled Presence—a Kingdom in which He reigns in Love and in Perfect Beauty, and where all are joyously consecrated to the performance of His will. It does not mean that His gift of

free will will be withdrawn any more than it is withdrawn on earth. It will be extended as freely, but those who are there will have seen more truly that their freedom has come to them in proportion as they have harmonized their wills to His will and also that their joys have increased in the same ratio.

Without freedom of will there can be no true love. Love in its perfection is the harmonious blending and union of two wills. There is no loss of individuality in love but rather a finding of one's highest and best self in another. And that discovery always produces joy and strength which one may not possess alone. Love never desires to be by itself but ever seeks union with the beloved.

This is the nearest the human mind, and at present the human spirit, can approach to the conception of heaven. All spiritual beings there are not subject to the force of that will, for love never uses force. They are conscious that they still have the gift of free will, the gift of choice, and they rejoice in treasuring that gift. If this were not true they would be but automatons, and they would be deprived of the joy of *giving themselves* and the joy of voluntary service. The supreme joy of love is in the giving of one's self.

We have a hint from Jesus that there were spiritual beings who exercised that gift of free will and because of their rejection of love, lost the joy of that presence. There is a darkness that comes into every life, human or spiritual, that sins against love. The punishment is not inflicted by the injured one, but is automatic, and self-imposed. God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. If evil or rebellion enters into the heart of a spiritual being, it cannot abide even heaven, it seeks darkness. It is self-eliminating.

So we cannot imagine a condition in the Presence of God when His will is not being done; for as the beings around Him see the real content of that will, with all its beneficence and compassion, their desire is that it be expressed more and more. In reverse order, if we conceive that heaven is a sphere of order and harmony and love, we know that it is because God's perfect will is being done there. Instantly His thoughts find quick response and instantly they are conformed to and carried out.

That Will on Earth.

So Jesus tells us to pray that God's will may be done *on earth* as it is done in heaven.

How unwarranted the thought of linking that

will with anything that makes for physical pain, disease, sorrow and death. God has not one plan for His will in heaven, and another plan for those of us while we are still on earth. God's will for man as well as for spiritual beings has behind it always the desire for the expression of a perfect Love—a perfect self-giving. We shall never fully realize the character of God until we know that He is *always giving Himself to each one of us*. This was the revelation of Jesus of the true character of the Father. He said, "I came to do the will of Him that sent me." By words and deeds, by persistent opposition to disease, by healing, and by forgiveness of sins, He was the reflection of that will of God which was perfect Love toward man.

God's will must forever be separated from even the idea of evil, sickness, distress, catastrophe or tragedy of any character. When these things deprive us of our health, or blot out the lives of our dear ones, it is because *His will has been opposed or obstructed*. His will has not been done and it dishonors Him for us to say so.

The gift of free will to man makes possible every known character of evil, of disorder, disease, disaster and premature death. Much of this is due to the source of the greatest enemy of *love*,

viz., selfishness. Man seeks his own—not another's good. In so seeking he loses his truest good, which is God. None of the terrible sufferings that befall man are from God. They are the result of man's inhumanity to man.

God took this chance in bestowing upon man the gift of free will. Let us not blame God for this abuse of this priceless gift but keep the blame where it belongs. It is very simple if we follow the teachings of Jesus.

Joy in That Will.

Picture for a moment a place on earth where God's will is being done—His plan and purpose being carried out. Let it be in a small community or even in a single house. There is no reason why we should expect to find in the occupants anything of the character of premature angels or disembodied spirits. On the contrary they would be the most wholesome of all human beings, pulsating with every human emotion, healthy, vigorous, glad of the sun, air and food, participating in all the requirements of life, yet all under the radiant spell of the spirit; all feeling ever the presence of God in their lives, and as natural and joyous in their communion with Him as they would be in their communion with

one another. Members of such a community would ever be knowing more and more of the will of God and rejoicing more and more in offering themselves as instruments for the performance of that will. Might we not say that association with such a company of persons might indeed be a foretaste of *heaven!*

As they realized the real joy and strength that came to them by the design of God's will in their lives, so they would endeavor to reflect it and bring others to a similar knowledge.

In the bestowal of that gift, God limited Himself to human beings in the operation and expression of that will on earth. He performs His good works through us. As we accept it so we become the instruments for its expression. Through His loyal ones only, His will is done on earth. What an aspiration this great truth should awaken within us, to be God's men and God's women, and to know that, according to His plan, *He is depending upon us to work His will.* That is the vision that Jesus intended to unfold to his disciples, when He told them to pray that the Father's will be done *in earth* as it is done in heaven, i.e., through the response and obedience of consecrated subjects.

God's will will be done on earth only as clean

mindful men and women, with hearts aflame with love, set themselves courageously to become instruments of His power and compassion and spokesmen of His truth.

HIS HANDS AND FEET.

By *Bessie E. Ellsbree*.

"Who will be feet and hands for me?" He pleadeth.

"No more I tread this earth, where once I trod.
Whose hands and feet will work as mine untiring?
Whose eager lips will tell the Word of God?"

Still is there need and daily growth greater,
For some to heal, to comfort, guide and bless,
For strong and loving hands to free the captive;
For some to lighten the world's deep distress.

Our feet, our hands, our eyes, our hearts and voices,
All to Thy service, Master, here we give!
Oh take them! Use them as Thine own from henceforth,
That men, through us, may know that Thou dost live!

Thus we summarize:—"Thy will be done," as a part of our daily prayer, should never be even suggestive of a meek acceptance of an inexorable Divine decree, but a glorious acknowledgment of the true character of the God we serve, the perfect confidence in the beneficent character of His will and the hope that it may become operative among men on earth.

It is not a lament betokening a mysterious ob-

stacle to the operation of our will, but a cry of inner victory and a call to action on our part to show forth to men the power and the character of God's will. Those who pray that phrase aright are ready to fit themselves to become channels of this power and love.

God's will is the will of Love. We must measure everything that may happen by that standard and in this way we may approximate the will of God.

By this method the will of God will never hold anything mysterious for us. There will be no more such outworn phrases as "inscrutable wisdom," "hidden design," and "God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." Love, while still the greatest of all invisible forces in the world, is at the same time the most obvious. Love is always in the open, for Love is truth and life. The ways of the Lord are plain. How clearly Jesus revealed it when He replied to Philip's troubled question, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou, show us the Father? . . . The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, who dwelleth in me, He doeth the works."

So the words and works of God were manifested and demonstrated in the life and teachings

of Jesus. Therefore, all mystery and darkness regarding God's will are banished when we follow the teachings of the Master. He said His followers were to be like a light set upon a hill,—that our light was to *shine*. In all our thoughts of God's will we are to reflect the *light* of Him who was, and is the *Light of the world*.

THE WILL OF GOD.

What is Thy will, O God?

We pray, "Thy will be done
On earth, e'en as in Heaven."

As each day's course is run.
Yet oftentimes take little care
To learn the meaning of this prayer.

What is Thy Will, O God?

Is it to lay Thy hand
Upon Thy children heavily?

Are we to understand
That but for patience to endure
- We pray, salvation to insure?

What is Thy Will, O God?

Is it not blessings, poured
Unstintedly, on all mankind?

For happiness restored
To every heart, through love for Thee,
So that Thy laws obeyed shall be?

If but Thy will were done

On earth, as in Thy Heaven,
There would be nought of pain or woe,

No sin to be forgiven;
So let us pray, "Thy will be done,"
With earnest faith, from sun to sun.

Supplementary Note.

It is joyous to record that in not a few quarters in our Church, the same view has been taken recently. One of the clearest expressions on the subject was recently given by the Right Rev. H. Ashton Oldham, Bishop Coadjutor of Albany. In a series of papers on Prayer Book Revision he had this to say on the phrase in the Lord's Prayer:

"This, moreover, is not a mere individual petition but has to be interpreted, like all else in this prayer, in a *social* sense, and here, particularly, in its relation to its preceding clause. '*Thy Kingdom come!*' It looks far afield and touches all departments of life. In the city, in the country, in the shop, in the office, in work and in play, in ourselves, in others, may His will prevail.

"This petition represents the very heart and essence of all true prayer. For, in the ultimate, Christian prayer is not bending God's will to ours, but bending our will to God's. It starts with the assumption that His will is best, His purpose supreme, and goes on the supposition that God and man are allies working together for a great Cause, in the pursuit of which all that concerns man sinks into insignificance. '*Thy will*

be done,' here and everywhere, first, last and at all times, is its constant and passionate petition. Thy will be done in me; Thy will be done by me, with all the strength and influence that I have, so that my feeble efforts, my utter sacrifice if need be, added to and co-operating with all the forces that make for righteousness, may be enabled to advance the kingdom of God by so much as a hair's breadth. No act of meek submission to the inevitable is this; but an enthusiastic, joyous, powerful, positive aspiration which makes man a fit and pliable and willing instrument of the Almighty in the furtherance of His great ends. As Father Carey well says, this petition, and indeed all true Christian prayer, may be reduced to a single phrase of just four words—'Use me again today.' "

PART II.
SEEKING GOD'S WILL.

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INTRODUCTION.

AS the heart of man is ever longing for love and friendship, so the soul of man is ever longing for truth. Men may apparently content themselves with less but they are never truly happy unless heart and soul are satisfied with the vision of love and truth, which God alone bestows. Without this possession man is lacking in true happiness because he is incomplete. Many persons have failed to gain this vision because of an arbitrary separation of human and divine, or physical and spiritual. They have treated them as if they were mutually antagonistic. They are not. Man is a whole and must be treated as such, and his development must proceed along lines which embrace and make provision for both physical and spiritual growth. The neglect of one works harm upon the other and man suffers accordingly. A person who impoverishes his body with the idea that it is only the spirit that counts,

displays as warped a view of truth as the man who starves and neglects the spirit and cares only for the body. In God's plan the development should progress in harmonious order, with equally divided attention. The spirit requires a noble instrument in order to carry out the full will of God. God's plan is for perfection in body as well as perfection in spirit. To approximate less than this is to reject the Master's words, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The attainment of a perfect love with complete surrender to God as Perfect Love, means the attainment of a perfect spirit in man. As men and women attain this perfection of spirit they will attain, gradually, the physical perfection seen in the harmonious operation of all parts of the body. Perfect bodies and perfect health are by no means among the impossibilities. As men and women combine the aspirations of perfect souls and perfect bodies, the generation to come will soon reach the standard of God's plan for man.

Many have striven earnestly for this vision but it has been blurred by various Bible passages which would seem to set up a natural enmity between body and spirit, and which would also designate God as the author of sickness, for a beneficent purpose, which might not be achieved in any

other way. Thus, the prayer of real faith has been inhibited, because the person praying for help could not possibly be free from the pious thought that the sickness might be from God's hand *for a purpose*, and if so, how could it be resisted? As God's character was given a blemish so prayer, no matter how fervent, was rendered ineffectual.

The vision of God's purpose can never be made clear until one has a vision of God as Perfect Love. In order to attain this we must take two important steps.

1. We must be on our guard against accepting anything in the way of interpretation which causes anxiety or questioning, through a conflict with our moral or ethical sense.

2. We must endeavor to gain a more complete conception of the character of God, by reading the Gospels, as the reflection of that character in the acts and teaching of the Man, Jesus. These are the two thoughts to be expounded in this section.

CHAPTER I.

MISREPRESENTING GOD'S WILL.

AT a meeting of an association of ministers at which the subject of the healing work was being presented, one of the clergy said he had been taught that God must certainly be connected with illness in some cases, because Jesus had said of Lazarus: "This sickness is not unto death, but *for the glory of God*, that the Son of man might be glorified thereby."

The difficulty here lies in the failure to comprehend our Lord's meaning. To take it literally, that God had stricken Lazarus with a disease and was to go further, and strike him with death for the *purpose of giving Jesus the opportunity* to demonstrate His power, would be to place God in the category of the person who would do evil that good may come. Such an act would deprive God of the character of Divine Love, which we attribute to Him. It would resolve the act to the level of a conjuror's trick with Jesus as an accessory. As we analyze this inter-

pretation thus frankly and see how false it is, we reject it.

Jesus fought disease and death, as *opposed to God's will and plan*. There certainly was enough of it in the world in His time without the need of any special preparation of it on the part of the Father.

What then was the meaning of the words of Jesus? A simple paraphrase will reveal it. Here is what He would say: "Lazarus is sick, not unto death. That evil which overshadows him shall not overcome him, but shall be turned to God's glory. I love him and I shall go to him. His sisters love him and they too have faith. We shall utilize the power of this love and faith and shall seize this opportunity, not only to show forth God's power and glory, but to glorify the Son of God, who thus works the Father's will."

We take no undue liberty in presenting the above paraphrase, because it is based on His teaching of the Father's character and verified by His practice of *overcoming evil* according to the will of the Father.

The same thought comes out in the words of Jesus with regard to the man born blind: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents,

but that the works of God should *be made manifest in him.*"

Many ministers have also interpreted the passage to mean that God was the *author* of this man's blindness in order that Jesus might have the opportunity to manifest His (God's) works.

In the first place such reading is unintelligent. The very passage itself contradicts such interpretation. The question at issue is: *WAS* it because of his *sin* or his parents' *sin* that God caused him to be born blind? The Jews traced the blindness directly to God.

Let us again paraphrase the words of Jesus: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents. God does not work that way. This blindness gives us the opportunity of manifesting the works of God in this man. I am going to work the works of Him that sent me. You should not demean God by attributing this sad condition of blindness to Him. I am going to reveal His true plan and will for this man. As you see that, you will recognize His true character and you will glorify Him."

Then He proceeds to awaken the man's faith and to demonstrate what the works of God were—sight to the blind, and a human soul won to Him, through the spiritual sight also awakened.

When we gain vision of the God of Love, whom Jesus revealed by word and deed, it is impossible to consider Him as capable of the acts of cruelty such interpretations would fasten upon Him.

The Jews would say: "God sent that blindness because of some sin."

The theologian would say: "God sent that blindness and kept that man a beggar; shut out from the light of day, deprived of the pleasures of youth and manhood, in order to *create* an opportunity for Jesus to do an act that would glorify Him. We must not question God's methods."

The true disciple of Jesus revolts from the untruth in both statements. Jesus disposed of the Hebrew theology and showed that the man's sad condition was *not a result of God's work or plan*, but was a condition to be used as an opportunity *to demonstrate God's true plan and will for man*. God was to receive the glory, because of the manifestation of His power over evil, which power was set in operation by man's faith. God's works had not been manifested in the blindness. The glory was to follow the true manifestation of His works, which was the restoration of sight.

In order to comprehend the true nature of our Lord's words we must separate ourselves from

the Hebraic coloring and the conventional theological interpretation. Through the latter, God has been given a very bad name. Some modern theologians do not hesitate to charge up to Him acts such as those noted above, which we would think unworthy of a high type of Christian gentleman. Certainly the theologians have failed to grasp the character of God the Father, as Divine Love, and Infinite Compassion, whom Jesus was ever striving to reveal to the world.

Our true relationship with God never really begins until we glimpse the vision of His true character. Then we are certain that He is in no sense the author of evil, even that good may come. He is, on the contrary, opposed to evil in all forms—moral, mental or physical, and He offers His power that we may overcome it and so glorify Him.

A New Day Dawning.

When the author first attempted a revision of the Jewish theology, which would clarify the teaching of Jesus and so make possible a revival of His healing ministry in the Church, he was attacked as a heretic. In nearly every instance these attacks came from those who were known in the church as "theologians." From the very

beginning, however, he was supported in his position by several Bishops of more than national repute and a goodly number of the clergy. During the past five years there has been a distinct change noted on the part of many of the clergy. There is a growing tendency of many ministers not only to give ear, but to declare themselves when convinced.

The most remarkable instance of this character is an editorial, which appeared in *The Churchman* recently, entitled, "Judaizing the Argument." It is a courageous article. Thirty years ago it would have rent the Church in twain. Now it merely becomes the target for a small number of critics, whose weapons seem hopelessly ineffective. The editor opens by saying that "one of the tragic wastes of the religious life has been the spiritual energy expended by Christians in trying to make their beliefs and teachings square with ancient explanations and symbolism. . . . The Church has been moderate in its demands on men's reason. It is the 'doctors' who have played the mischief with people who want to believe in a just God, a Christ who is a Savior, and Sacraments that are ethical."

The writer expresses the deepest veneration for the doctrines of the Atonement, the Trinity,

and the Sacraments, yet many people fail to get the truths revealed by them because of the round-about way by which they are presented to the average seeker. He feels the student should not be carried through the difficulties of the Jews of the apostolic age, nor compelled to accept their mental processes. The point of view is so far removed that frequently a doctrine is robbed of all reality and becomes mere ecclesiastical formula.

"The pity is," he writes, "that when we set forth to convert an unbeliever in the twentieth century to Christ, we should increase the hazard by weighing him down with all the arguments which Paul used in battling with his stubborn Jewish hearers; that we should compel him to go back and take precisely the same trail which the Jews of the Dispersion took in finding Christ. There is a nearer and more direct way of approach; but the pesky old doctors aren't satisfied if Christian doctrines become easy and natural. They insist upon adding to all the difficulties that the modern candidate may encounter in getting converted, those particular difficulties of the Jews of the apostolic age. It seems as if, in the process of conversion, we have to drag with us into the Kingdom today all the ancestors of all the twelve tribes of Israel."

Lopsided Theological Education.

One of the most striking sections of the editorial dwells upon one of the most vital aspects of the entire subject; the conventional course of study in the average theological seminary. We have again and again stated that many of the clergy would be glad to take up the healing work, but they are the victims of a theological system which has created tremendously high barriers. The writer acknowledges the difficulty as follows:

"Some of us when we got through our seminaries were almost as well equipped to be rabbis as Christian ministers. This, we hastily acknowledge to be rhetorical exaggeration; but who of us who has been through a theological seminary cannot recall regretfully the uninspiring hours spent in tying together Judaism and Christianity? We learned the sacramental doctrine, the theory of the Atonement, by first becoming inoculated with Judaism. We learned the doctrine of the Trinity by first becoming badly translated Greeks. And we are all so sophisticated in this roundabout, historical method, that it doesn't even now seem queer or foolish to us. We have lost the desire to shake free from it. But what a tragic waste of energy and spirit! What a need-

less tax on the reason and faith! And what difficult Christians it produces! We are not contending that our theological students are over-educated by this exposure to history. We are contending that their education is lopsided. They know too much about the Jews, and not enough about Christians."

* * *

"Some of us are better fitted to argue with Jews of the first century than with a modern congregation. If our clergy came out of our seminaries as well armed with arguments to appeal to John Smith today as with those arguments which St. Paul fashioned for the Jews of his time, they would convert more people than they do. We ought all to be teaching theology. We ought to be teaching the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Atonement, sacramental doctrine. Many rectors are teaching such doctrines, but some of us in doing so are teaching a badly translated Jewish and Greek theology. There is not a doctrine of the Church that is not capable of being understood by plain people. Christian doctrine is calculated to be a help, not a hindrance, to the faith. It would be unpardonably cruel for the Church to insist upon doctrines if this were not so.

"We believe in the study of theology. We so

thoroughly believe in it that we deplore the present lip-service, which theology is receiving from the Church. Theology is not an ornament; it is an aid and guide to religion. Because we believe that to be true, we wish to have theology do today what it did in every creative age in the Church's history, to translate eternal truths into the language and needs of the hour. We shall bring back theology into the pulpits and classrooms of the Church when we have a theology fitted to be of use there. The marvel is that Christ has been conquering the world, shackled and impeded by a theology phrased in language and imagery which the ordinary Christian cannot understand. The science of pedagogy is being respected today by the teachers of every science. Theology alone makes no progress in method."

CHAPTER II.

THE DEADENING LETTER AND THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT.

IT was the letter of the law which prevented the Jews from receiving the truth regarding the Character of God which Jesus tried to reveal to them. I do not refer to the nation as a whole but to the orthodox scholars and teachers of the day who opposed His teachings and openly entered into bitter controversy with Him. They were those who said "Abraham is our father." To which Jesus replied, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

There were those who said, "We are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses. As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." It was to such that Jesus said: "He that is of God heareth God's words. Ye, therefore, hear them not because ye are not of God."

Theological education unfortunately does not always carry with it spiritual vision and capacity to discern the truth. Else the educated Jews,

orthodox to the last degree, could not have continued in their learned ignorance, and their opposition to the great exponent of Truth. If theology does not teach capacity to discern truth it has contradicted its very purpose. Much that is called "orthodox" is taught today in many churches, with regard to God's will, but it is the orthodoxy of the Hebraic idea of God and it is just as far from the truth as Jesus removed it, in His discussion with the Jews. The average commentary on the New Testament is a sad commentary on the teachings of the Master, as many of His words and acts are given a traditional slant which robs them of the real truth they would reveal.

"Traditional interpretation" seems to follow one general line. Each commentary of the Bible is based on a preceding commentary. There are professors in seminaries, of all denominations, teaching exactly what they learned from former professors and traditional commentators, whose whole aim was to conform to "orthodoxy," with final refuge to the phrase: "The faith once for all delivered to the saints."

We should bear in mind that this faith referred to was delivered by Jesus of Nazareth, and "the saints" are supposed to be those who recorded the

contents of that faith. Too often, however, the faith presented comprises the doctrines, dogmas and traditional interpretations of "saints," and of fathers who lived many centuries afterward, and who added here and there a word, a punctuation mark, or a phrase, which would substantiate the theological opinion of the day.

In the minds of the vast majority of theologians today, "the Church" takes the place as the authoritative teacher and deliverer of the faith.

When one listens to the voice of "the Church" in the edicts of the host of teachers, beginning with the Roman Catholic, passing into the Anglican and ending with the most recently organized sect, calling itself an orthodox "Church," a Babel is presented from which one seems to be unable to extract anything in the form of harmonious theological thought. Yet, each bears witness to a rigid orthodoxy; each presents proof texts, cites commentators and offers decisions from councils, and quotes early saints in support of its position.

The recourse is seldom to "the spirit" of the teaching of Jesus. I say "the spirit" because, like the Jews of old, there are many Christian theologians today quoting "the letter" of the teaching of Jesus to suit their purpose, unmindful of the fact that the letter of that one quotation

may be *contradictory to* all the "spirit" of His teaching found elsewhere in the Gospels.

It is a common instinct in the heart of the average man (and woman too) to defend at all costs, the cause to which he has committed himself; to emphasize its strong points, to cover up or minimize the weak points. This situation is pathetically commonplace among the Christian churches today. It is seen not only in the differences which divide the denominations, but also in the extreme divergences of doctrinal opinion, which form the basis of bitter controversy and the growth of opposing parties within the churches.

If one is going to find "the faith, once for all delivered to the saints," in which "Church" and from which *party* in that Church is one going to find it?

It is not a sign of loyalty to defend one's Church when it is in error or obscures the truth, or hinders in the presentation of the whole truth. Too many men have wrecked their conscience on this rock. Jesus did not so treat the Jewish Church, in which He was born and reared, and in which He taught. He was always seeking truth from God; always making that truth known, and when that revelation did not harmonize with the orthodox teaching of the day, He broke with the

leaders, and was rejected and crucified by them because of it. He did not break with God. No truth-seeker is ever afraid of consequences. It is only the truly brave who are content with the verdict of posterity.

The greatest devotion to a cause is exhibited in purifying it; keeping it free from all that would impede its progress, or weaken its appeal to men as a possessor and an exponent of truth. No true scientist cherishes for one moment any theory or opinion he finds obstructive in his search for truth.

The true Christian should seek and work with a mind as clarified. Yet how many theologians there are who devote themselves to the strengthening and defense of a distinct blemish in their system.

Therefore, what I present is not anything new, nor an individual interpretation which I have set up in opposition to former commentators, but a presentation of the truth concerning God as revealed by Jesus of Nazareth, in the Gospels, and the truth of the *entire content* of that teaching, and practice, and life, as a *harmonious whole*.

I claim that it is easily possible for a reader of the Gospels to catch the spirit of that life and teaching so completely that he will be quick to detect instantly the few phrases in those records

which have been given Hebraic color, or which have been amended by later copyists to emphasize a favorite doctrine, the result of a theological development of centuries.

These discrepancies are so *very few* that they have practically no effect on the message as a whole, when we consider the Oriental mind, the Hebraic tendency, the materialistic Messianic conceptions, the gross ignorance and superstitions of the day, and the theory held by many scholars that the first three Gospels are expansions of an original document of unknown authorship.

St. Mark's was the first of the three. For many centuries the Gospels were preserved only by being copied again and again by hand, and it is a great marvel that the spirit of the teaching is preserved as wonderfully as it is.

These same elements Jesus had to contend with in His presentation of truth and in His battle for it. Through His entire life He was opposed bitterly in His endeavor to reveal the true character of God. That opposition sprang from and was carried on violently by leaders of religious thought of the day.

All of the above influences obscured the truth as presented by "Moses and the prophets." The entire critical formula Jesus used in overcoming

these scriptural difficulties is summed up in His warning: "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Therefore my purpose is not to present a new interpretation, but to make an appeal to read the Gospels in the light of the spirit and to appropriate the truth that will certainly come to all who read it according to the formula of Jesus: "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Supplementary Note.

Dr. Rufus M. Jones, in his new book, *Spiritual Energies in Daily Life* (Macmillan Co., N. Y.) touches very pointedly on the confusion as to the content of Christianity, arising from the conflicting claims of various sets. He says:

"One of the greatest difficulties about the whole matter is the difficulty of deciding where to look for the essential traits of Christianity. Are they to be found in the teaching of Jesus? Are they revealed in the message of St. Paul? Are they embodied in the Messianic hope? Are they exhibited in the primitive apostolic Church? Are they set forth in the great creeds of orthodoxy? Are they expressed in the imperial authoritative Church? Are they to be discovered in the Protestantism of the modern world? This catalogue

of preliminary questions shows how complicated the subject really is. To start in on any one of these lines would be of necessity to arrive at a partial and one-sided answer.

“Nowhere can we find pure and unalloyed Christianity; always we have it mixed and combined with something else, more or less foreign to it. The creeds contain a larger element of Greek philosophy than of the pure original gospel. The Messianic hope is far more Jewish than it is “Christian.” The imperial authoritative Church is Christianity interpreted through the Roman genius for organization and merged and fused with the age-long faiths and customs of pagan peoples. Protestantism is an amazingly complex blend of ideas and ideals and everywhere interwoven with the long processes of history. Even this did not drop from the sky ready-made! Nor did St. Paul’s message flash in upon him with the Damascus vision, as a pure heaven-presented truth.

“What, then, is Christianity? In answering this question we can not confine ourselves to the teaching and the work of Jesus. Important as it is to go ‘back to Jesus’ that is not enough. We can not fully comprehend the meaning of Christianity until we take into account the fact

that the invisible, resurrected Christ is the continuation through the ages of the same revelation begun in the life and teaching of Jesus. Galilee and Judea mark only one stage of the Gospel, which is, in its fullness, an eternal Gospel. The Christian revelation which came to light first in one Life—its master interpretation and incarnation—has since been going forward in a continuous and unbroken manifestation of Christ through many lives and through many groups and through the spiritual achievements of all those who have lived by Him. Christianity is, thus, the revelation of God through personal life—God humanly revealed.”

* * *

“Some persons talk as though God were a kind of composite Being, got by adding up the God of the natural order, the God of the Old Testament, and the God as Father about whom Jesus taught. He is, according to this scheme, in some way a compound aggregate of infinite power, irresistible justice, and eternal love. Sometimes one ‘attribute’ is predominant, and sometimes another, while in some mysterious way all the dissonant attributes get ‘reconciled.’ This is surely boggy ground to build upon.”

His conclusion is most helpful.

“The Kingdom of God though not all in sight yet is, I believe, as sure as gravitation. The invisible, eternal Christ, living in the soul of man, revealing His will in moral and spiritual victories in personal lives, is, I am convinced, as genuine a fact as electricity is. But we shall see all that Christianity means only when the living totality of the revelation of God through humanity is complete.”

CHAPTER III.

FEAR OF "HIGHER CRITICISM."

AT this point some critic may say: "Question any possibility of error in the Gospel and you open a way for a general stripping of the whole structure." Such a cry of alarm has no basis. Similar cries were raised a generation ago with the development of what was termed "Higher Criticism." The complete destruction of the Bible was predicted by many ministers. Extreme groups among certain critical scholars arose but their influence was negligible. Out of all the work there emerged a far more intelligent Bible interpretation than before; God was not removed but was brought infinitely nearer, as He was shown to be represented in many pages purely as a tribal Deity, instead of the great God of the universe that He is. Up to the time of Jesus the Jewish nation had a very primitive and incomplete conception of God. This was the burden of the prophets.

Therefore, we must not fear for a moment

that the detection of a copyist's error here or there, or the insertion of a pet doctrine, formulated centuries later, will rob us of the teaching of Jesus or have any effect upon that wondrous life. Nor will it detract from the value of the original record. We have to take into consideration the development and training of the minds of those who copied the records. The Jewish conception of God is still implanted firmly in the minds of many Christians today. Little wonder if those in the early centuries were unable to free themselves of it. The slight blemishes in the Gospel, however, resulting from this do not harm the original record so long as we bear this great fact in mind.

"We must all admit that if we have in Christ a final revelation of God, that revelation must be patient of progressive interpretation. Life is never static, and even by the time the Fourth Gospel was written it was clearly realised that there was large room for the spirit to take of the things of Christ and interpret them to the men of that age. If we regard our Lord as the supreme religious genius; if we believe that His spiritual nature was such, that while living under our conditions He was aware of Reality and saw the actual truth of God's attitude to man and what

it involved in man's duty, we must perceive that in mediating this to men He must have been hampered, not only by their preconceived and obstinate notions of God and duty, but by the language, and still more by the mental pictures, which these religious beliefs had created. We must therefore expect that in any account of His life we shall find the teaching which was subversive of the religious notions of His time would be that which was most original to Him, and that into the *first report of His words* and actions, and into *all subsequent editings* of that report, the *shadows of ancestral tendencies of belief and traditional ideas would be sure to press*. Such a clue to the interpretation of the Gospels is not subjective. It is a legitimate method of criticism applicable to any ancient teaching." *

What then shall be our norm or rule in our reading?

The very one which Jesus Himself followed and set up for us. He criticised the Jewish theology. He broke with the religious teachers of the day. The common people did not turn against Him. We read: "The people heard Him gladly." The Jewish church leaders were those who rejected Him and *His* teachings of God. He

* *God and the Struggle for Existence*. Streeter.

clearly showed them they did *not know* God. He told them so face to face.

We are not far wrong when we say the same thing today to those leaders of the Church who teach the Old Testament, and the God of the Old Testament, with practically the same fidelity and with the same lack of vision the Jewish leaders taught them in the day of Jesus. A Bishop announced publicly not long ago that he considered "every part of the Old Testament of equal value with any part of the New Testament, and that it must be so read and accepted, and taught."

Jesus rebuked the closest friends He had for their clinging to the old theology, orthodox as it seemed, when they asked, "Shall we call down fire and consume them?" He replied: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." They were emulating a prophet and felt they were very orthodox in this respect. The Son of man was, and is, representative of a higher character of God's will than they knew. (Read St. Luke 9: 51-56.)

In this rebuke of His friends He did not cast them off. Nor did they leave Him because He criticised and set at naught one of their fundamental doctrines of God, which they had been

taught by their *parents* and by their *religious teachers*. They became acquainted with a higher truth about God, far more wonderful than the one that had been shattered by their new teacher. *God had not been taken away from them, but a false impression of Him had been removed.* Henceforth they were to know God in a still higher sense, as being possessed of greater power and of a different character.

I like to believe that this was a turning point in the life of St. John. He was keen in vision, ready to let the old husk fall and to receive the full fruit which Jesus revealed. God's great majesty and power were not removed from Him but the expression of that Power was shown to be Love, not violence. The "Son of Thunder" became the "disciple whom Jesus loved"—not a weakling, but the bravest of them all!

Guidance in Gospel Reading.

How are we to know when an error has crept into the Gospel record; how is an ordinary reader, with no time for research, to discriminate? The difficulty is not so insuperable as it might seem. I venture to present a few suggestions which may prove helpful.

1. Much will depend first of all upon the attitude with which we approach the Gospel record. Too many of us are hampered by false theology through denominational bias or faulty childhood training. Therefore an *open mind* with a real inner desire for truth is required. To this there should be joined the recognition of the power of the spirit of God in our lives, and that the record is the great revelation of that truth. Therefore, we must read with the *spirit first*, and then with the mind. This attitude once attained opens the way. Those who have it, easily recognize it in others, irrespective of denominational differences. In fact, denominational differences disappear and become insignificant, and a vision of true unity in Him glows on the horizon. Other difficulties disappear as one reads with inner mind and eye; and the words of the Master are given fulfillment:

"Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

That is the foundation. Once this is laid, the task, although fraught with problems, is comparatively easy.

2. Again, unfortunately, not a few of the teachings of Jesus have been interpreted by theologians

to substantiate dogmas formulated in comparatively recent years. This is seen in reading into the parables a literal meaning, and the elevation of a tiny incident or phrase in the parable, into a doctrine. For instance, one commentator states that the "two pence" given by the Good Samaritan to the innkeeper to pay for the keep of the unfortunate man, represent the "two sacraments of the church." Such exaggeration of the Master's teaching is inexcusable. Again there are not a few scholars of all denominations who read purely figurative lessons in many of the literal acts of Jesus. For instance, leprosy is set up as a "symbol of sin," and consequently more emphasis is placed on His warfare against sin, than upon the fact of His actual cure of this horrible disease. The same liberty is taken with blindness, too often interpreted as "spiritual blindness." This point has been expanded in my former book, *Does Christ Still Heal?*

The secret of obtaining truth from the Gospels is through the ability to discern even in the recorded words of Jesus, the dividing line between (1) parabolic teaching, (2) literal words and acts, and (3) metaphor or hyperbole. Jesus spoke and taught through parables or stories for the purpose of impressing, usually, one great prin-

ciple, or illustrating one great principle concerning God's character or the character of the Kingdom. These should not be interpreted literally. He frequently resorted to metaphor and the extreme figures of speech commonly used in Oriental countries for the purpose of making vivid the principles of the Kingdom. This is not the slightest warrant for giving them literal interpretation, yet the conventional picture of an actual hell of the most fiendish character has been built by many church teachers out of the metaphors of Jesus.

The very same group of theologians relegate all of *His* literal acts of healing to the category of "signs and wonders," used by Him as signs of His Messiahship, in spite of the fact that He told His disciples that they were to "continue" to do these works and even greater works. They accept His command to preach and ignore His command to heal.

3. A final suggestion, which will prove most illuminating, is to keep *the whole content of the Gospel clearly in mind*. In spite of the slight differences in Gospel incidents as related by the different writers, there does emerge a *harmonious whole*. As we become more and more acquainted with the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, a great

and beautiful structure is erected. When Gospel writers do not agree on some detail of His spoken words or works, we do not feel we have discovered a blemish in His work, but see only an error in a human record of it. Therefore, when a statement is not in harmony with what we have found to be the *whole content of the Gospel*, it is effaced by the greater volume of truth. It is quickly recognized as alien to the true character of the Master, which has emerged from our reading and which has become such a great and living reality.

The record of the cursing of the fig tree is incompatible with explicit teaching that we should bless those that curse us and pray for those who spitefully use us. We are to love our enemies and pray for them. He told them how His Father made "the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Could a Son so familiar with a Father's plan curse what the Father blessed?

There is a great distance between the scholarly, even pious, theologian, bent upon his exegesis and the open-minded truth seeker, freed from traditions, who has *found Jesus* and is living in Him. As in His time, so today it is easy to recognize those who have "been with Jesus."

Reading with the Inner Spirit.

Dr. Orchard in his sermon on "The Desire to Realize Christ" says most aptly on this thought of inner experience: "Jesus speaks not from a printed page but from somewhere within the heart." He further adds: "It is not easy for the ordinary reader to realize Jesus in the Gospels. The Gospels are very curious biographies, and their way of reporting Jesus does little to help the reader. . . . Often we find it very confusing and unreal." He speaks then of those who find Him as companion and who experience the real miracle of His being at their side. "This is the Jesus," he says, "who is often unknown to the theologians and ecclesiastics, a Jesus who seems to patronize heretics and outcasts."

St. Paul's Epistles.*

The same principle may be applied to some of St. Paul's epistles. Because they are deeply

* Dr. W. W. Wade, in his new book, "New Testament History" (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York), devotes a long chapter to the development of theology in the New Testament (Chapter X). He shows by numerous quotations St. Paul's participation in the prevalent expectation of the nearness of Christ's second coming. The nearness of that return influenced his advice in respect of certain social relations (pp. 639-640). Compare 1 Cor. 7:31; Romans 13:11, 12; Phil. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:15 ff.; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Romans 14:10, 12; 1 Cor. 7:8-24. Dr.

colored in places by a strong Hebraic theology, there is no reason why we should reject these wonderful letters or even other parts of a chapter where unusual difficulties or differences occur. The truth seeker will make allowances for the following:

1. St. Paul's early training.
2. St. Paul's zeal in converting Jews.
3. The atmosphere in which he lived.
4. The customs of the time, which required great differences between the lives, in manners and even morals, of men and of women.
5. St. Paul's idea, which prevailed throughout the first few years of his conversion, that Jesus was to return to earth in a short time and bring all things to an end. Exhortations to preparation for that second coming, considered imminent, are found in several epistles.

When we unwrap these Hebraic trappings with which St. Paul clothed his early Christian teach-

Wade also calls attention to the Hebraic ideas of satisfaction for collective sin, which could be rendered to God through the death of some individual member or members of the sinful community. "It was on these lines," he writes, "that St. Paul sought an explanation of the death of Christ." Much that St. Paul wrote became the basis of all the various atonement theories. For a student seeking truth this chapter alone will prove most illuminating.

ings, we do not destroy the value of his letters, we simply bring many things to light. Nor do we reject St. Paul in finding these or other discrepancies, for again and again we encounter the most exalted passages, filled with truth and beauty, where the teachings of Jesus stand out in all their simplicity and spiritual power. They are almost perfect expressions of the Word of the Master and reflect gloriously the power of His life in a new Jewish convert. His experience of the power of Christ within has never been surpassed.

But where we find anything that does not harmonize with the whole content of the teachings of Jesus, there should be no hesitancy in choice.

This thought must ever be in our mind: Every epistle, indeed, every part of the New Testament should be measured by a single standard: Does this harmonize with the teachings and practices of Jesus?

Dr. Swain has stated that "if we can but free the religion of Jesus from the crude psychology of the antiquated custom or science of other days and see it at home in the fairer world of today, it would shine with new lustre; and at the same time give a rich, new meaning to the world itself—such as it could never have apart from religion."

Those who are seeking truth, with an open mind, will always have the truth revealed to them. Customs and manners will change, but the truth will remain, and grow ever brighter unto the perfect Day. That was His promise.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples, indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (St. John 8:31, 32.)

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESULT OF OUR KNOWLEDGE.

NOT until one knows the content of God's will for men as revealed by Jesus, can one approach God in prayer with any degree of intelligence. The average appeal for help in mental anguish in physical pain is invariably neutralized by a conditional clause, testifying to the possibility of a refusal to respond. Even if not expressed, the theology of the centuries holds a deep rooted place in the subconscious mind and transforms the appeal into one of questioning uncertainty.

Uncertainty is like quicklime to faith; like jealousy to love. The two cannot exist side by side. One must supplant the other. There is no such thing as an even balance between the two. Consequently, the very requirement Jesus makes for successful approach to the Father—faith in the perfect compassion and beneficent character of the Divine Will—is the very requirement that is lacking.

The fact that so many Christians hold this incomplete and erroneous view of God's will, explains why so many petitions for bodily healing are unanswered. Frightened pleading is not prayer as Jesus taught it.

Many failures may also be traced to the fact that even such petition is taken up as a last resort. Medicines have failed, man has failed, *maybe* God can help. God is suddenly expected to become a wonder-worker, and even bargains are struck with Him if He will only help. Alas, how frequent are the failures under these conditions! It is not God who fails. It is man who has failed by his neglect of the fundamental principles of Jesus. He does not know the character of the God to whom he is appealing, and so he has failed to tap the springs of God's power and love by the exercise of a real faith.

Still another element of obstruction to recovery is seen in the inner conflict, as to whether God did not send or may be prolonging the sickness "for His glory." By others the sickness is interpreted as punishment from His hand, for a purpose. Both ideas dishonor God's character and contradict the teachings of Jesus. Good health, perfect health, lies in the will of God for all—and whenever it does not exist, His perfect will has

in some way been thwarted by self or others, through ignorance or sin.

In some of the early Calvinistic theology the will of God was traced so completely in every happening that might befall man that it really became little else than fatalism. With the elect, God's grace was irresistible, with the non-elect there was no possibility of escaping His wrath.

I have, therefore, more than a quiet admiration for the Puritan preacher who placed his rifle on his saddle as he started on his circuit. His wife piously protested, saying, "John, I wouldn't take that rifle, for you know if you fall a victim to the Indians it will be because your time has come." "Yes, Mary," he replied, "but what if I should meet an Indian whose time had come."

Many pray that the penalty may be removed and that God's hand may be lifted from them. Thus health is sought because man desires it, not because it is really God's will. With an inner spiritual battle this sets up between the spirit of man and the spirit of God! When one asks for health or relief because he knows it is the will of God for him, the whole attitude is changed. He does not think merely of his desire for health but that he may use that more perfect health as an instrument of God in His kingdom, by doing

His work in a much less hampered way. Thus faith is fortified with a great purpose.

With such a viewpoint, practically all the uncertainty with regard to the response of God is eliminated. Such faith begins to assume the size of a grain of mustard seed.

In that state of mind one does not approach the Father in prayer as a stranger knocking at the gate of a benefactor with a feeling of trepidation that something unusual is being asked in the way of a favor or that there is a possibility of denial. But one approaches with the confidence possessed by a loving child, whose pleasure it is to do always the will of the Father—"always those things that please Him"—and who finds its freedom and happiness in the conformity to that higher, wiser, guiding Will.

In like manner, the disciple of Jesus, who has striven to live and act in conformity to the will of the Father, may feel assured he is not asking any special favor but is merely placing himself in closer touch with the Divine Will in seeking to overcome sin, disease and sickness, mental or physical. He feels that what he is asking will, in being granted, be but an expression of that Divine Will, whose special power he is able to draw upon because of his knowledge of its char-

acter, and his faith in its continuance. In his prayer he automatically offers himself, as the human instrument by which that Divine Will may be expressed on earth. He asks that "Thy will be done" in, him and he knows that as all obstructions to that Divine Will are removed, there can be only one result.

This is the confidence possessed by St. John. All those who accept the full teaching of the Master may make that confidence their own, as he expressed it: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us:

"And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (St. John 5:14-15.)

THE END

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